THE FLYING GIRL *and* HER CHUM

By Edith Van Dyne

Author of "Aunt Jane's Nieces"

525

T. Margerie

mai 1913

The Flying Girl Series

The Flying Girl and Her Chum

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_W9-CSS-221

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Orissa, sitting up.

The Flying Girl
And Her Chum

BY

EDITH VAN DYNE

Author of

The Flying Girl; Aunt Jane's Nieces Series

Etc.

Illustrated by Joseph Pierre Nuyttens

The Reilly & Britton Co.

Chicago

Copyright, 1912
by
The Reilly & Britton Co.

The Flying Girl and Her Chum

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Girl With the Yacht	9
II	The Girl With the Aeroplane	31
III	A Prodigy in Aeronautics	46
IV	The Aluminum Chest	54
V	The Last Drop of Gasoline	63
VI	Castaways	73
VII	Two Girls and One Island	87
VIII	An Owl Concert	97
IX	Miss Columbus and Miss Crusoe	106
X	Madeline Dentry's Proposition	117
XI	A Game of Checkers	126
XII	The Quest of the "Salvador"	139
XIII	Capricious Fate	148
XIV	On the Bluff	159
XV	Boat Ahoy!	166
XVI	An Island Kingdom	171
XVII	Don Miguel Del Borgitis	183
XVIII	The Mask Off	192
XIX	An Exciting Race	203
XX	Besieged	211
XXI	Capturing an Aeroplane	220
XXII	Ramon Ganza	231
XXIII	A Desperate Alternative	243
XXIV	The Diplomacy of Chesty Todd	256
XXV	Scuttled	270
XXVI	Orissa Returns	279
XXVII	Facing the Crisis	286
XXVIII	The Prisoner	290
XXIX	Orissa Decides	304

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Orissa, sitting up.
Frontispiece

"It—it has run away with 'em, Steve. It's gone wrong, man; there's danger ahead!" *Page* 120

Suddenly a huge form filled the doorway, inspecting the newcomers with a quick, comprehensive glance.
Page 184

Madeline, seated at the table, studied the faces before her curiously, while an amused smile played around her lips. "We cannot accept our enemy's proposition," she announced. *Page* 246

The Flying Girl and Her Chum

CHAPTER I

THE GIRL WITH THE YACHT

Perhaps they call them "parlor" cars because they bear so little resemblance to the traditional parlor—a word and a room now sadly out of style. In reality they are ordinary cars with two rows of swivel seats down the center; seats supposed to pivot in every direction unless their action is impeded by the passenger's hand baggage, which the porter promptly piles around the chairs, leaving one barely room to place his feet and no chance at all to swing the seat. Thus imprisoned, you ride thoughtfully on your way, wondering if the exclusive "parlor car" is really worth the extra fee.

However, those going to San Diego, in the Southland of California, are obliged to choose between plebeian coaches and the so-called "parlor" outfit, and on a mild, sunny morning in Feb-

ruary the San Diego train rolled out of the Los Angeles depot with every swivel seat in the car de luxe occupied by a passenger.

They were a mixed assemblage, mostly tourists bound for Colorado, yet quite unknown to one another; or, at least, not on speaking terms. There was a Spanish-looking gentleman in white; two prim, elderly damsels in black; a mamma with three subdued children and a maid, and a fat man who read a book and scowled at every neighbor who ventured a remark louder than a whisper. Forward in the car the first three seats were taken by a party from New York, and this little group of travelers attracted more than one curious glance.

"That," murmured one of the prim ladies to the other, "is Madeline Dentry, the famous heiress. No one knows how many millions she has just inherited, but she is said to be one of the richest girls in America. The stout lady is her chaperon; I believe—she's a distant relative—an aunt, or something—and the thin, nervous man, the stout lady's husband, is Madeline Dentry's financial manager."

"I know," replied the other, nodding; "he used to be her guardian before she came of legal age, a month or so ago. His name is Tupper—Martin J. Tupper—and I'm told he is well connected."

"He is, indeed, to have the handling of Madeline's millions."

"I mean in a family way. The Dentrys were nobodies, you know, until Madeline's father cornered the mica mines of the world and made his millions; but the Tuppers were a grand old Baltimore family in the days of Washington, always poor as poverty and eminently aristocratic."

"Do you know the Tuppers?"

"I have never met them. I strongly disapprove of their close association with Miss Dentry —a fly-away miss who kept Bryn Mawr in a turmoil while she was a student there, and is now making an absurd use of her money."

"In what way?"

"Haven't you heard? She has purchased Lord Tweedmonk's magnificent yacht, and has had it taken to San Diego harbor. I was told by the bell boy at the Los Angeles Hotel—bell boys are singularly well-informed, I have observed—that Madeline Dentry is to take her new yacht on a cruise to Hawaii and Japan. She is probably now on her way to see her extravagant and foolish plaything."

"Dreadful!" said the other, with a shudder. "I wonder how anyone can squander a fortune on a yacht when all those poor heathens are

starving in China. What a pity the girl has no mother to guide her!"

"Tell me about the beautiful girl seated next to Madeline."

"I do not know who she is. Some stranger to the rich young lady, I imagine. They're not speaking. Yes, she is really beautiful, that girl. Her eyes are wonderful, and her coloring perfect."

"And she seems so modest and diffident."

"Evidence of good breeding, whoever she may be; quite the opposite of Madeline Dentry, whose people have always been rapid and rude."

The fat gentleman was now glaring at the old ladies so ferociously that they became awed and relapsed into silence. The others in the car seemed moodily reserved. Mr. Martin J. Tupper read a newspaper. His stolid wife, seated beside him, closed her eyes and napped. Madeline Dentry, abandoning a book that was not interesting, turned a casual glance upon her neighbor in the next chair—the beautiful girl who had won the approval of the two old maids. Madeline herself had a piquant, attractive countenance, but her neighbor was gazing dreamily out of the window and seemed not to have noticed her. In this listless attitude she might be inspected at leisure, and Madeline was astonished at the perfect profile, the sheen of her magnificent hair, the rich

warm tintings of a skin innocent of powders or cosmetics. Critically the rich young lady glanced at the girl's attire. It was exceedingly simple but of costly material. She wore no jewels or ornaments, nor did she need them to enhance her attractiveness.

Perhaps feeling herself under observation, the girl slowly turned her head until her eyes met those of Madeline. They were gloriously blue eyes, calm and intelligent, wide open and fearless. Yet with a faint smile she quickly withdrew them before Madeline's earnest gaze.

"Will you have a chocolate?"

"Thank you."

The strong hand with its well-shaped fingers did not fumble in Madeline's box of bonbons. She took a chocolate, smiled again, and with a half shy glance into her neighbor's face proceeded to nibble the confection.

Madeline was charmed.

"Are you traveling alone?" she asked.

"Yes. I am to meet my brother and—some friends—in San Diego."

"I am Miss Dentry—Madeline Dentry. My home is in New York."

"And mine is in Los Angeles. I am not straying very far away, you see."

Madeline was piqued that her hint was disregarded.

"And your name?" she asked sweetly.

The girl hesitated an instant. Then she said: "I am Miss Kane."

Mr. Tupper looked up from his newspaper.

"Kane?" he repeated. "Bless me! That's the name of the Flying Girl."

"So it is," admitted Miss Kane, with a little laugh.

"But flying is not in your line, I imagine," said Madeline, admiring anew the dainty personality of her chance acquaintance.

"At present our train is dragging, rather than flying," was the merry response.

Mr. Tupper was interested. He carefully folded his paper and joined in the conversation.

"The idea of any girl attempting to do stunts in the air!" he remarked disdainfully. "Your namesake, Miss Kane, deserves to break her venturesome, unmaidenly neck—as she probably will, in the near future."

"Nonsense, Uncle!" cried Madeline; "Orissa Kane, so far as I've read of her—and I've read everything I could find—is not at all unmaidenly. She's venturesome, if you like, and manages an aëroplane better than many of the bird-men can; but I see nothing more unwomanly in flying than

in running an automobile, and you know *I* do that to perfection. This Flying Girl, as she is called, is famous all over America for her daring, her coolness in emergencies and her exceptional skill. I want to see her fly, while I'm out here, for I understand there's to be an aviation meet of some sort in San Diego next week, and that Orissa Kane is engaged to take part in it."

"Flying is good sport, I admit," said Mr. Tupper, "but it would give me the shivers to see a girl attempt it. And, once a machine is in the air, you can't tell whether a man or woman is flying it; they all look alike to the watcher below. Don't go to this aviation meet, Madeline; you've seen girls fly. There was Miss Moissant, at Garden City——"

"She barely got off the ground," said Miss Dentry.

"And there was Blanche Scott——"

"They're all imitators of Orissa Kane!" declared Madeline impatiently. "There's only one real Flying Girl, Uncle, and if she's on the program at the San Diego meet I'm going to see her."

"You'll be disappointed," averred the gentleman. "She's a native of these parts, they say; I presume some big-boned, masculine, orange-picking female——"

"Wrong again, sir! The reporters all rave

about her. They say she has a charming personality, is lovely and sweet and modest and—and——" She paused, her eyes dilating a little as she marked the red flush creeping over Miss Kane's neck and face. Then Madeline drew in her breath sharply and cast a warning glance at her uncle.

Mr. Tupper, however, was obtuse. He knew nothing of Madeline's suspicions.

"Have you ever seen this dare-devil namesake of yours, Miss Kane?" he asked indifferently.

"Yes, sir," she answered in a quiet tone.

"And what did you think of her?"

Madeline was powerless to stop him. Miss Kane, however, looked at her questioner with candid eyes, a frank smile upon her beautiful face.

"She has a fine aëroplane," was her reply. "Her brother invented it, you know. It's the Kane Aircraft, the safest and speediest yet made, and Stephen Kane has taught his sister how to handle it. That she flies his Aircraft successfully is due, I am sure, to her brother's genius; not to any especial merit of her own."

Mr. Tupper was staring now, and beginning to think. He remembered reading a similar assertion attributed to Orissa Kane, the Flying Girl, who always insisted on crediting her brother with

whatever success she achieved. Perhaps this girl had read it, too; or, perhaps——

He began to "put two and two together." Southern California was the favorite haunt of the Flying Girl; there was to be an aviation meet presently at San Diego; and on this train, bound for San Diego, was riding a certain Miss Kane who answered to Madeline's description of the aërial heroine—a description he now remembered to have often read himself. Uncertain what to say, he asked haltingly:

"Do you call it 'aviatrix' or 'aviatrice'? The feminine of 'aviator,' you know."

"I should say 'aviatress,' now that you appeal to me," was the laughing reply. "Some of the newspaper men, who love to coin new words, have tried to saddle 'aviatrice' on the girl aviator, and the French have dubbed her 'aviatrix' without rhyme or reason. It seems to me that if 'seamstress,' 'governess' or 'hostess' is proper, 'aviatress' is also correct and, moreover, it is thoroughly American. But in—in the profession—on the aviation field—they call themselves 'aviators,' whether men or women, just as an author is always an 'author,' regardless of sex."

Mr. Tupper had made up his mind, by this time. He reasoned that a girl who talked so professionally of aviation terms must be something more

than a novice, and struggled to remember if he had inadvertently said anything to annoy or humiliate Miss Kane. For, if the little maid so demurely seated before him was indeed the famous Flying Girl, the gentleman admitted he had good reason to admire her. Madeline was watching his embarrassment with an expression of amusement, but would not help him out of his dilemma. So Mr. Tupper went straight to the heart of the misunderstanding, as perhaps was best under the circumstances.

"Your first name is Orissa?" he inquired, gently.

"It is, sir."

"Won't you have another chocolate?" asked Madeline.

Orissa took another chocolate, reflecting how impossible it seemed to hide her identity, even from utter strangers. Not that she regretted, in any way, the celebrity she had gained by flying her brother Stephen's Aircraft, but it would have been so nice to have ridden to-day with these pleasant people without listening to the perfunctory words of praise and adulation so persistently lavished upon her since she had acquired fame.

"I knew Cumberford some years ago," continued Mr. Tupper, rather aimlessly. "Cumberford's your manager, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; and my brother's partner."

"Good chap, Cumberford. Had a queer daughter, I remember; an impossible child, with the airs of a princess and the eyes of a sorceress. She's grown up, by this time, I suppose."

Miss Kane smiled.

"Sybil Cumberford is my best chum," she replied. "The description still applies, so far as the airs and eyes are concerned; but the child is a young lady now, and a very lovable young lady, her friends think."

"Doubtless, doubtless," Mr. Tupper said hastily. "If Cumberford is in San Diego I shall be glad to renew our acquaintance."

"You are bound for Coronado, I suppose," remarked Orissa, to change the subject.

"Only for a few days' stay," Madeline answered. "Then we expect to make a sea voyage to Honolulu."

"That will be delightful," said the girl. "I've lived many years on the shores of the Pacific, but have never made a voyage farther to sea than Catalina. I'm told Honolulu is a fascinating place; but it needs be to draw one away from Coronado."

"You like Coronado, then?"

"All this South Country is a real paradise," declared Orissa. "I have had opportunity to com-

pare it with other parts of America, and love it better after each comparison. But I am ignorant of foreign countries, and can only say that if they excel Southern California they are too good for humans to live in and ought to be sacred to the fairies."

Madeline laughed gayly.

"I know you now!" she exclaimed; "you are what is called out here a 'booster.' But from my limited experience in your earthly paradise I cannot blame you."

"Yes, we are all 'boosters,'" asserted the younger girl, "and I'm positive you will join our ranks presently. I love this country especially because one can fly here winter and summer."

"You are fond of flying?"

"Yes. At first I didn't care very much for it, but it grows on one until its fascinations are irresistible. I have the most glorious sense of freedom when I'm in the air—way up, where I love best to be—but during my recent exhibitions in the East I nearly froze making the high flights. It is a little cold even here when you are half a mile up, but it is by no means unbearable."

"They call you a 'dare-devil,' in the newspapers," remarked Mr. Tupper, eyeing her reflectively; "but I can scarcely believe one so—

so young and—and—girlish has ventured to do all the foolish aërial tricks you are credited with."

Mrs. Tupper had by this time opened her eyes and was now listening in amazement.

"Yes," she added, reprovingly, "all those spiral dips and volplaning and—and—figure-eights are more suited to a circus performer than to a young girl, it seems to me."

This lady's face persistently wore a bland and unmeaning smile, which had been so carefully cultivated in her youth that it had become habitual and wreathed her chubby features even when she was asleep, giving one the impression that she wore a mask. Now her stern eyes belied the smirk of her face, but Orissa merely smiled.

"I am not a 'dare-devil,' I assure you," she said, addressing Mr. Tupper rather than his wife. "I know the newspapers call me that, and compare me with the witch on a broomstick; but in truth I am as calculating and cold as any aviator in America. Everything I do is figured out with mathematical precision and I never take a single chance that I can foresee. I know the air currents, and all their whims and peculiarities, and how to counteract them. What may seem to the spectators to be daring, and even desperate, is often the safest mode of flying, provided you understand your machine and the conditions of

the air. To volplane from a height of five or ten thousand feet, for example, is safer than from a slight elevation, for the further you drop the better air-cushion is formed under your planes, and you ride as gently as when suspended from a parachute."

Madeline was listening eagerly.

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"Afraid? Why should I be, with my brother's wonderful engine at my back and perfect control of every part of my machine?"

"Suppose the engine should some time fail you?"

"Then I would volplane to the ground."

"And if the planes, or braces, or fastenings break?"

"No fear of that. The Kane Aircraft is strong enough for any aërial purpose and I examine every brace and strut before I start my flight—merely to satisfy myself they have not been maliciously tampered with."

Then Madeline sprung her important question:

"Do you ever take a passenger?"

Orissa regarded Miss Dentry with a whimsical smile.

"Sometimes," she said. "Do you imagine you would like to fly?"

"No—no, indeed!" cried Mr. Tupper in a hor-

rified voice, and Mrs. Tupper echoed; "How absurd!" But Madeline answered quietly:

"If you could manage to take me I am sure I would enjoy the experience."

"I will consider it and let you know later," said the Flying Girl, thoughtfully. "My chum, Sybil Cumberford, has made several short flights with me; but Sybil's head is perfectly balanced and no altitude affects it. Often those who believe they would enjoy flying become terrified once they are in the air."

"Nothing could terrify Madeline, I am sure," asserted Mrs. Tupper, in a rasping voice; "but she is too important a personage to risk her life foolishly. I shall insist that she at once abandon the preposterous idea. Abandon it, Madeline! I thought your new yacht a venturesome thing to indulge in, but flying is far, far worse."

"Oh; have you a yacht?" inquired Orissa, turning eagerly to the other girl.

"Yes; the *Salvador*. It is now lying in San Diego harbor. I've not seen my new craft as yet, but intend it shall take us to Honolulu and perhaps to Japan."

"How delightful," cried Orissa, with enthusiasm.

"Would you like to join our party?"

"Oh, thank you; I couldn't," quite regretfully;

"I am too busy just now advancing the fortunes of my brother Stephen, who is really the most clever inventor of aëroplanes in the world. Don't smile, please; he is, indeed! The world may not admit it as yet, but it soon will. Have you heard of his latest contrivance? It is a Hydro-Aircraft, and its engines propel it equally as well on water as on land."

"Then it beats my yacht," said Madeline, smiling.

"It is more adaptable—more versatile—to be sure," said Orissa. "Stephen has just completed his first Hydro-Aircraft, and while I am in San Diego I shall test it and make a long trip over the Pacific Ocean to exploit its powers. Such a machine would not take the place of a yacht, you know, and the motor boat attachment is merely a safety device to allow one to fly over water as well as over land. Then, if you are obliged to descend, your aircraft becomes a motor boat and the engines propel it to the shore."

"Does your brother use the Gnome engines?" inquired Mr. Tupper.

"No; Stephen makes his own engines, which I think are better than any others," answered Miss Kane.

By the time the train drew into the station at San Diego, Madeline Dentry and her companions,

the Tuppers, knew considerably more of aëroplanes than the average layman, for Orissa Kane enjoyed explaining the various machines and, young and unassuming as she appeared, understood every minute detail of their manufacture. She had been her brother's assistant and companion from the time of his first experiments and intelligently followed the creation and development of the now famous Kane Aircraft.

At the depot a large crowd was in waiting, not gathered to meet the great heiress, Madeline Dentry, but the quiet slip of a girl whose name was on every tongue and whose marvelous skill as a bird-maid had aroused the admiration of every person interested in aërial sports. On the billboards were glaring posters of "The Flying Girl," the chief attraction of the coming aviation meet, and the news of her expected arrival had drawn many curious inhabitants of the Sunshine City to the depot, as well as the friends congregated to greet her.

First of all a tall, fine looking fellow, who limped slightly, sprang forward to meet Orissa at the car steps and gave her a kiss and a hug. This was Stephen Kane, the airship inventor, and close behind him stood a grizzled gentleman in a long gray coat and jaunty Scotch cap. It was Mr. Cumberford, the "angel" and manager of the

youthful Kanes, the man whose vast wealth had financed the Kane Aircraft and enabled the boy and girl to carry out their ambitious plans. This strange man had neither ambition to acquire more money nor to secure fame by undertaking to pilot the Aircraft to success; as he stood here, his bored expression, in sharp contrast to the shrewd gray eyes that twinkled behind his spectacles, clearly indicated this fact; but a little kindness had won him to befriend the young people and he had rendered them staunch support.

On Mr. Cumberford's arm was a slender girl dressed all in black, the nodding sable plumes of whose broad hat nearly hid Orissa from view as the two girls exchanged a kiss. Sybil Cumberford had no claim to beauty except for her dark eyes—so fathomless and mysterious that they awed all but her most intimate friends, and puzzled even them.

And now an awkward young fellow—six feet three and built like an athlete—slouched bashfully forward and gripped Orissa Kane's outstretched hand. Here was the press agent of the Kane-Cumberford alliance, Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd; a most astonishing youth who impressed strangers as being a dummy and his friends as the possessor of a rarely keen intellect. Orissa smiled at him; there was something humorous about

Radley-Todd's loose-jointed, unwieldy personality. Then she took her brother's arm and passed through the eager, admiring throng to the automobile in waiting.

Beside Mr. Cumberford's car stood a handsome equipage that had been sent for Miss Dentry's party, and as Orissa nodded to her recent acquaintances Sybil Cumberford inquired:

"Who is that girl?"

"A Miss Dentry, of New York, with whom I exchanged some remarks on the train. She has a yacht in the bay here."

"Oh, yes; I've heard all about her," returned Sybil, indifferently. "She's dreadfully rich; rather snubbed New York society, which was eager to idolize her—says she's too young for the weary, heart-breaking grind—and indulges in such remarkable fancies that she's getting herself talked about. I hope you didn't encourage her advances, Orissa?"

"I fear I did," was the laughing reply; "but she seemed very nice and agreeable—for a rich girl. Tell me, Steve," she added, turning to her brother, "what news of the Hydro-Aircraft?"

"It's great, Orissa! I put the finishing touches on it night before last, and yesterday Mr. Cumberford and I took a trial spin in it. It carries

two beautifully,'' he exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm.

''Did you go over the water?'' asked Orissa.

''Nearly half a mile. Then we dropped and let the engine paddle us home. Of all the hydro-aëroplanes yet invented, Ris, mine will do the most stunts and do them with greater ease.''

They were rolling swiftly toward the ferry now, bound for the Hotel del Coronado, a rambling pile of Spanish architecture that dominates the farther side of San Diego Bay. Presently the car took its place in the line of vehicles on the ferry and Mr. Cumberford, who was driving, shut off the power and turned to Orissa.

''You are advertised to exhibit the new Hydro-Aircraft the first day of the meet—that's Monday,'' he announced. ''Do you think you can master the mechanism by that time?''

''Is it the same old engine, Steve?'' she inquired.

''Exactly the same, except that I've altered the controlling levers, to make them handy both in the air and on water, and balanced the weight a little differently, to allow for the boat attachment.''

''How did you do that?''

''Placed the gasoline tanks in the rear. That

makes the engine feed from the back, instead of from directly overhead, you see."

Orissa nodded.

"I think I can manage it, Mr. Cumberford," she decided. "Will Steve go with me on Monday?"

"Why—no," returned the manager, a trifle embarrassed. "Our fool press agent had an idea the event would be more interesting if two girls made the flight out to sea, and the trip back by boat. Sybil has been crazy to go, and so I let Chesty Todd have his own way."

"You see, Miss Kane," added Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, who was seated beside Mr. Cumberford, while Stephen and the two girls rode behind, "the management of the meet couldn't get another aviatress to take part, because you had been engaged to fly. The other air-maids are all jealous of your reputation and popularity, I guess, so the management was in despair. The dear public is daffy, just now, to watch a female risk her precious life; it's more thrilling than when a male ventures it. So, as they're paying us pretty big money, and Miss Cumberford was anxious to go, I—er—er—I——"

"It is quite satisfactory to me," announced Orissa quietly. "I shall enjoy having Sybil with me."

"I knew you wouldn't object," said Sybil.

"The only thing I don't like about it," observed Stephen, reflectively, "is the fact that you have never yet seen my Hydro-Aircraft. It's safe enough, either on land or water; but if the thing balks—as new inventions sometimes do—there will be no one aboard to help you remedy the fault, and the invention is likely to get a black eye."

"Give me a tool bag and I'll do as well as any mechanician," responded Orissa, confidently. "And your Hy is not going to balk, Steve, for I shall know as much about it as you do by Monday."

CHAPTER II

THE GIRL WITH THE AEROPLANE

The morning following Orissa Kane's arrival, which was the Saturday preceding the meet, she went with her brother Stephen to his hangar, which was located near the Glenn Curtiss aviation camp on a low bluff overlooking the Pacific. There the two spent the entire forenoon in a careful inspection of the new Hydro-Aircraft.

As she had told Madeline Dentry, the Flying Girl never wittingly took chances in the dangerous profession she followed. The remarkable success of her aërial performances was due to an exact knowledge of every part of her aëroplane. She knew what each bolt and brace was for and how much strain it would stand; she knew to a feather's weight the opposition of the planes to the air, the number of revolutions to drive the engine under all conditions and the freaks of the unreliable atmospheric currents. And aside from this knowledge she had that prime quality known as "the aviator's instinct"—the intuition what to

do in emergencies, and the coolness to do it promptly.

Stephen Kane, who adored his pretty little sister, had not the slightest fear for her. As she had stood at his side during the construction of his first successful aëroplane and learned such mechanical principles of flying as he himself knew, he had no doubt she could readily comprehend the adaptation he had made to convert his Aircraft into the amphibious thing that could navigate air and water alike.

"It seems to me quite perfect, Steve," was Orissa's final verdict. "There is no question but the Hydro-Aircraft will prove more useful to the world than any simple aëroplane. If we could carry gasoline enough, I would venture across the Pacific in this contrivance. By the way, what am I to do on Monday? Must I carry Sybil in any certain direction, or for any given distance?"

"I'll let Chesty explain that," said Steve, turning to the youthful press agent, who had just then entered the hangar in company with Mr. Cumberford and Sybil.

"Why, er—er—a certain program has been announced, you know," explained Chesty Todd; "but that doesn't count, of course. We'll say that owing to high winds, contrary air currents, or

some other excuse, you had to alter your plans. That'll satisfy the dear public, all right."

Orissa frowned slightly.

"You mustn't compromise me in such ways, Mr. Todd," she exclaimed. "The Kane-Cumberford Camp has the reputation of fulfilling its engagements to the letter; but if you promise impossible things of course we cannot do them."

The young man flushed. In the presence of Orissa Kane this big fellow was as diffident as a schoolboy.

"I—I didn't think I promised too much," he stammered. "There are two or three islands off this coast, known as the Coronado Islands. The big one—you can see it plainly from here—is named Sealskin. No one knows why. There are seals there, and they have skins. Perhaps that's the reason. Or they may all be related, and the seals' kin play together on the rocks."

"Be sensible, Chesty!" This from Mr. Cumberford, rather impatiently.

"I'm quite sensible of Miss Kane's annoyance," resumed Mr. Radley-Todd, "but I hope she will find her task easy. She has merely to fly to Sealskin Island, a dozen or fifteen miles—perhaps twenty—and alight on the bosom of the blue Pacific. Mighty poetical in the advertisements, eh? Then she'll ride back in motor boat fashion.

When she approaches the shore she is to mount into the air again, circle around the hotel and land on the aviation field before the grand stand. If any part of this program seems difficult, we can cut it out and tell the reporters——"

"Steve," interrupted Orissa, "can I rise from the water into the air?"

"Of course. That's my pet invention. While skimming along the water you lift this lever, free the propeller, then point your elevator and—up you go!"

"Run out the machine. We will make a trial and you shall show me how it is done. The rest of Chesty's program seems easy enough, and if I master this little trick of rising from the water we will carry out our contract to the letter."

"All right. Your costume is in that little dressing room in the corner, Ris."

While his sister donned her short skirt, leggings and helmet, Stephen Kane called his mechanicians and had the Hydro-Aircraft rolled out of the hangar and headed toward the ocean. For himself, he merely put on a sweater and his cap and visor, being ready long before Orissa appeared.

The inventor seldom flew his own craft, for an accidental fall had lamed him so that he was not as expert an aviator as his sister had proved to

be. He was recovering from his hurt, however, and hoped the injured leg would soon be good as new. Meantime Orissa was doing more to render the Kane Aircraft famous than any man might have done.

A wire fence encircled the Kane-Cumberford Camp for some distance, except on the ocean side, where the bluff protected it from invasion. There was an entrance gate adjoining the beach road, and while the assembled party awaited Orissa's appearance Steve noticed that a motor car stopped at the gateway and a man and woman alighted and entered the enclosure, leisurely approaching the spot where the Hydro-Aircraft stood.

"Oh!" exclaimed Sybil, whose dark eyes were far-seeing; "it's that girl who owns the yacht, Madeline what's-her-name."

"Dentry," said Steve. "I wonder if Orissa invited her here. Go and meet them, Chesty, and find out."

Mr. Radley-Todd promptly unlimbered his long legs and advanced to meet Madeline and Mr. Tupper. The press agent had an unlimited command of language when driving his pen over paper, but was notably awkward in expressing himself conversationally. He now stopped short before the visitors, removed his hat and said:

"I—er—pardon me, but—er—was your appointment for this hour?"

"Is Miss Kane here, sir?" asked Madeline, unabashed.

"She is, Miss—er—er——"

"Dentry."

"Oh; thank you."

"Then I will see her," and she took a step forward. But Chesty Todd did not move his huge bulk out of the way. So many curious and bold people were prone to intrude on all aviators, and especially on Miss Kane, that it was really necessary to deny them in a positive manner in order to secure any privacy at all. The press agent, in his halting way, tried to explain.

"We—er—Miss Kane—is about to—er—test the powers of our new Hydro-Aircraft, and I regret to say that—er—er—the test is private, you know."

"How fortunate that we came just now!" cried Madeline, eagerly, as she flashed her most winning smile on the young man. "Please lead us directly to Miss Kane, sir."

"Yes; of course; please lead us to Miss Kane," echoed Mr. Tupper pompously.

Chesty succumbed and led them to the group surrounding the machine, just as Orissa emerged from the hangar. Recognizing her recent travel-

ing companion, the Flying Girl ran up and greeted her cordially, introducing her and Mr. Tupper to the others present.

"I'm going to try out our new Hy," she said, with a laugh. "'Hy,' you must know, is my abbreviation of the Hydro-Aircraft—too long a word altogether. If you will promise not to criticise us, in case we foozle, you are welcome to watch our performance."

"That will be glorious," returned Madeline. "We have been to the bay to inspect the *Salvador,* my new yacht, but being anxious to see your new Aircraft and hoping to find you here, we ventured to stop for a few minutes. Forgive us if we intruded."

She spoke so frankly and was so evidently unconscious of being unwelcome that the entire group accepted her presence and that of her uncle without murmur.

Steve took his place in the "Hy" and Orissa sat beside him.

The motor boat attachment, which took the place of the ordinary running gear, was of sheet aluminum, as light and yet as strongly built as was possible for a thing intended to be practical. Adjustable wheels, which could be folded back when the boat was in the water, were placed on either side, to give the craft a land start. The huge engine

was beautiful in appearance, while the planes—a crossed arrangement peculiar to the Kane Aircraft—were immaculately white in their graceful spread.

"This upper plane," said Steve, proud to explain the marvels of his latest mechanical pet, "is so arranged that its position may be altered by means of a lever. If you're on the water and want to save gasoline you adjust the plane as a sail and let the wind drive you."

"Clever! Very clever, indeed," observed Mr. Tupper. "I had no idea these flying machines had been improved so much since I last saw an aviation meet, some six months ago."

"The art of flying is still in its infancy, sir," replied Mr. Cumberford. "It is progressing with wonderful strides, however, and young Kane is one of those remarkable geniuses who keep a pace ahead of the procession."

Even as he spoke Steve started the engine, and as the first low rumble of the propeller increased to a roar the machine darted forward, passed the edge of the bluff and, rising slightly, sped over the placid waters of the Pacific, straight out from shore.

He did not rise very high, but half a mile or so out the aviator described a half-circle and then, as gracefully as a swan, sank to the surface of the

ocean. Instantly a white wake of foam appeared at the rear of the boat, showing that the propeller was now churning the water. And now, with speed that to the observers appeared almost incredible, the Hydro-Aircraft approached the shore. A few yards from the bluff it abruptly rose from the water, sailed above the heads of the spectators, and after a circle of the field, came to a halt at almost the exact spot from which it had started.

This remarkable performance had taken place in so brief a space of time that those on the bluff had scarcely moved during the entire period. They now hastened forward to congratulate the inventor. Mr. Cumberford's grim features were for once wreathed in smiles; Chesty Todd capered like a schoolboy and flung his hat into the air as he yelled "Hooray!" while Sybil impulsively grasped Steve's hand in both of her own. As for Madeline Dentry, she eyed the young man wonderingly, asking herself if the marvel she seemed to have witnessed had actually occurred.

"Do you know," said Mr. Tupper, his voice trembling with excitement, "I wouldn't much mind a ride like that myself!"

Orissa was much pleased with this successful test of the new machine's powers. As the men

wheeled the Hydro-Aircraft back to its hangar she turned to Chesty and said:

"I forgive you, sir. Really, you were too modest in your promises. Sybil and I will carry out your program to the entire satisfaction of the management and the public, I am positive."

"I can hardly wait for Monday, Ris," exclaimed Sybil. "If father wasn't so afraid, I would learn to navigate the Hy myself."

"Ah, you interest me, my dear," returned her father, blandly; "you do, really. But as your talents will never enable you to rival Orissa it will be well for you to curb your ambitions. I've conceded a lot, to allow you to go with her on that long jaunt Monday."

"You have, indeed," laughed Orissa. "But Sybil and I will have a real joy ride, and be perfectly safe in the bargain. How long a time will the trip take us, Steve?"

"Oh, a couple of hours, or so; it will depend on whether the current is favorable to your paddling back. In the air you can do forty miles an hour, easily."

"We will take some lunch with us," said Sybil. "Don't forget to order it, Daddy."

Mr. Cumberford nodded. Unimpressionable as this strange man seemed, his daughter was verily the "apple of his eye" and he was not likely to

forget anything that might add to her comfort. Sybil's desire to aviate had been a constant source of disturbance to her father. He had worried a good deal over Orissa, during her first attempts to fly, but was now convinced of the girl's capability and, although he exhibited nervousness every time she gave one of her exhibitions, he had by degrees acquired supreme confidence in her skill. Still, being thoroughly experienced in all aviation matters, through his connection with the Kane Aircraft, Mr. Cumberford realized that flying is always accompanied by danger, and whenever an aviator met with an accident on the field he was wont to inform Sybil that on no account could she ever accompany Orissa again in a flight. He would even urge Orissa to abandon the dangerous work; but she answered him gravely: "This accident, as well as all others I ever heard of, was the result of carelessness and inexperience. The more flights I make the less liable am I to encounter accident. Perhaps I realize better than you do, Mr. Cumberford, the elements of danger, and that is the reason I am so careful to avoid every hazard."

Flying was an intoxication to Sybil. She never had enough of it and always complained to Orissa that their flights were of too short duration. Each time she was obliged to plead and argue with

her father for days, before obtaining his consent to let her go, and even now, when he had given his reluctant permission to Chesty Todd to advertise Sybil as the companion of the Flying Girl, he was frequently impelled to forbid the adventure. His only consolation was that the new invention seemed very safe and practical, and with Orissa's guiding hands at the levers his beloved daughter would be as well guarded as possible under such conditions.

As a matter of fact, protests from Mr. Cumberford had little value, as Sybil possessed a knack of getting her own way under any and all circumstances. She had really no great desire to operate an aëroplane herself, being quite content to remain a passenger and enjoy the freedom of riding, untrammeled by the necessity of being alert every instant to control the machine.

Orissa, excusing herself, retired to the hangar to change her costume, and the young inventor was left to listen to the enthusiastic comments of his friends.

"When will your Hydro-Aircraft be on the market, Mr. Kane?" asked Madeline.

"In the course of the next three months we expect to complete two other machines," he replied.

"I want one of them," she said quickly. "Will you teach me how to operate it?"

"Of course," he answered. "That is part of the bargain. But you have not asked the price, and for all business transactions I must refer you to Mr. Cumberford."

"Madeline, my dear! My dear Madeline!" protested Mr. Tupper; "what in the world are you thinking of?"

"That I would give Mr. Cumberford a check at once," she calmly answered.

"But I—we—that is, I can't permit it; I—I really can't allow it, my dear!" asserted the gentleman, evidently alarmed by her positive attitude.

Madeline's slight form stiffened and her eyes flashed defiantly.

"Mr. Tupper," said she to her uncle, "do I employ you to advise me, or to manage my business affairs?"

That he was greatly humiliated by this attack was evident. His face grew red and he half turned away, hesitating to make reply. Then Mr. Cumberford came to Mr. Tupper's assistance.

"Your—eh—friend—is quite right, Miss Dentry; quite right to oppose your—eh—reckless impulse, if I may put it that way. Your enthusiasm interests me; it—eh—interests me greatly; but for your own welfare and the comfort of mind of

your friends, I should advise you to—eh—curb your adventurous spirit, for the present. You have what is known as the 'Flying Fever,' which attacks the most conservative people when on the aviation field. Let it alone and it will dissipate, in time; but if you nurse it you—eh—buy a flying machine and become a slave. We have machines to sell, you know; we are anxious to dispose of all we can; but kindly keep your check for three months, and if at the end of that time you are still disposed to purchase, I will deliver the machine to you promptly."

"How can you do that? The demand will be greater than your ability to build the Hydro-Aircraft, after the exhibition of next Monday," she affirmed.

Mr. Cumberford regarded her thoughtfully.

"I believe you are right," said he. "Anyhow, I hope you are right. But I'll promise to reserve a machine, pending your decision. Young ladies who are seriously determined to become aviators and who—eh—have the means to indulge the fad to any extent, are rare; very rare. Therefore, my dear Miss Dentry, you—eh—interest me, and I'll keep my promise."

Madeline could not refuse to admit the fairness of Mr. Cumberford's proposition, and Mr. Tupper was grateful to him for his efficient support, so

harmony was once more restored. Sybil, indeed, smiled derisively as she exchanged a meaning glance with Madeline—a glance that said as intelligently as words: "How clever these men think themselves, and how helpless they really are to oppose us!"

Then Miss Dentry invited them all, including Chesty Todd, to dine on board her yacht the next day, which was Sunday, and the invitation being promptly accepted they all motored back to the hotel.

CHAPTER III

A PRODIGY IN AERONAUTICS

San Diego Bay is always interesting, with its shipping from all ports of the world, but on this gorgeous Sunday afternoon there was no prettier sight among the scattered craft than the trim yacht *Salvador,* lying at anchor just north of the ferry path. The Kane-Cumberford party found a small launch awaiting them at the pier, which quickly took them aboard the big white yacht, where Madeline, attired in appropriate sailor costume, cordially welcomed them.

"This affair is fully as great a novelty to me as it must be to you," she explained, as they cast admiring glances over the decks. "I bought the boat of an Englishman several months ago, with the understanding it should be delivered to me here; but I only arrived to claim it the day before yesterday. It has a crew of seven, besides the chef, who, I must admit, is my own selection, as I feared to trust the English taste in cookery. The English crew, however, seems capable and

every man jack wants to stay with the boat; so I've agreed to keep them. I'll introduce you to the skipper presently. He rejoices in the title of 'Captain' and has quite awed me with his superior manner and splendid uniform. But I'll introduce you to the creations of my chef, first, for dinner is waiting. Forgive Monsieur Champetre, if he falls down occasionally; he is as unused to the kitchen—or is it scullery? Oh, I know; the 'galley'—as I am to the cabin."

Really the chef needed no excuses, and after the meal they made a thorough inspection of the beautiful craft, peeping into the staterooms, the men's quarters and even into the sacred galley. Everyone aboard, including the big, bluff skipper, was so proud of the boat that he delighted to have it exhibited, and when it was understood that the slim, beautiful young lady guest was the famous Flying Girl the deference shown Orissa was amusing.

"I had intended to test the *Salvador* to-morrow and make a short run to sea in it," said Madeline; "but I am so eager to witness the aërial exhibitions that I shall postpone the voyage until later. My yacht is permanent, but this Aviation Meet is temporary."

The visitors returned to their hotel early in the

afternoon, for Orissa and Sybil had still a few preparations to make for the morrow's trip, while Steve and Mr. Cumberford decided to pay a visit to the aviation field, to which both the Kane Aircraft and the Kane Hydro-Aircraft had been removed by the mechanicians in charge of them. Chesty Todd's labors that Sunday evening were perhaps more onerous than those of the others of his party, for he had to meet an aggressive band of newspaper reporters and load each one to the brim with material for a double-header next morning. Having served as a journalist—and an able one—himself, Mr. Radley-Todd understood exactly the sort of priming these publicity guns required.

The home of the Kanes was a delightful orange ranch near Los Angeles, where the blind mother of Stephen and Orissa—their only parent—lived surrounded by every comfort and devoted attendants, while her boy and girl were engaged in the novel and somewhat hazardous exhibitions of the new Kane Aircraft. Orissa had remained at home with her mother while Stephen was perfecting his latest machine at San Diego, and had not left there until it was necessary to prepare for the Meet, in which she had engaged to take part. Mrs. Kane, perhaps because of her blindness,

seemed to have little anxiety on account of her daughter's ventures, although at the time of Orissa's first flights her nervousness had been poignant. Assured of her girl's skill and coolness, the mother had come to accept these occasions philosophically, as far as the danger was concerned, and she was naturally interested in Steve's inventions and overjoyed at the financial success which Mr. Cumberford's business ability had already insured the firm.

This Sunday evening Orissa wrote a long letter to her mother, telling how perfectly her brother's new machine worked, and assuring Mrs. Kane of her confidence in winning new laurels for Stephen on the morrow. "The latest engine, made for the Hy, is more powerful than were the others," she added, "but its operation is practically the same and while the combination of boat and aircraft necessitated a more complicated arrangement of the control, I have easily mastered all the details and could take the whole thing apart and put it together again, if obliged to do so."

The girl slept peacefully that night and neither she nor Sybil were in the least nervous when they went to the aviation field, overlooking the sea, after an early luncheon on Monday.

They found the Kane Hydro-Aircraft reposing

majestically in its hangar, in perfect order and constantly surrounded by a group of admiring and interested spectators. The little band of professional aviators present at the Meet welcomed Orissa very cordially, for every one of them knew and admired the brave girl who had so often proved her ability to manage her brother's machines.

The grand stand was packed with spectators, and long rows of automobiles lined the edge of the enclosure reserved for the exhibitors.

The "Kane Event," as it was called, was early on the program of the day, for it was understood that the flight over the ocean and the voyage back would consume much of the afternoon. Many had brought binoculars and other powerful glasses to watch the Flying Girl and her chum during their progress.

Sealskin Island lay a little to the south of the aviation field and was one of a group of barren rocks jutting out of the sea and plainly visible from the mainland. The Coronado Islands, which have little or no value, belong to Mexico, as the Mexican boundary is only twelve miles south of San Diego, and this group, although not appearing to be so far south, is below the line claimed by the United States. Therefore Orissa's flight

would be in a southwesterly direction and most of her journey made in plain view of every spectator.

As the "Hy" was run out to the center of the field Steve said to Orissa:

"I've anchored an aluminum chest just back of your seats, at the suggestion of Mr. Cumberford. In it are all the tools you could possibly need in case of emergency, a couple of warm blankets to use if your return trip proves chilly, and enough 'lunch'—which I think Sybil pleaded for—to last you both a week. The chest enables you to carry all this safely and comfortably, and it won't be at all in your way. Personally, I think such a precaution wholly unnecessary, but Mr. Cumberford is a good deal of an old woman where Sybil is concerned and it is easier to give up to him than to try to argue him out of an idea. Take the trip easy, Ris; we don't need to make time. What we want to demonstrate is the practicability of the machine, and we ourselves already know that it is thoroughly practical, and we therefore ought to be able to convince the world of the fact."

Orissa nodded.

"How about gasoline?" she asked.

"Both tanks are filled. There's enough to run you a hundred miles in air and fifty miles in water, which is far more than you will require.

Be gentle with the steering gear; it is such a long connection that it doesn't respond as readily as the old one, and I guess I've made the rods a trifle too light. I mean to rig up a more substantial device as soon as I get time, but this will do you all right if you don't jerk it. Put a little more strength to the wheel and turn it gradually, that's all."

"I understand," she replied. "Are you ready, Sybil?"

"Waiting on you, Ris."

"And I think the crowd is waiting on us."

The band was at this moment playing its loudest and most stirring tune and as the two venturesome girls, dressed in appropriate aërial costume, appeared on the field, wildly enthusiastic shouts rose from ten thousand spectators. Chesty Todd had decorated the braces of the machine with bunches of fresh violets and the aluminum and nickeled parts shone gloriously in the sun.

"Be good, Sybil," said Mr. Cumberford. "Take care of her, Orissa."

The girls laughed, for this was the old gentleman's customary parting warning.

"All right, Ris," said Steve.

She applied the power and one of the mechani-

cians gave the propeller a preliminary whirl. Then Orissa threw in the automatic clutch that started the machine and it ran forward a few feet and promptly rose into the air. A moment later it was speeding straight out to sea, at an altitude of a hundred feet, and the wonderful voyage of Stephen Kane's new Hydro-Aircraft was begun—a voyage destined to vary considerably from the program mapped out for it.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALUMINUM CHEST

Orissa realized quite perfectly that Sealskin Island was much farther away from the mainland than it appeared, so on leaving the shore she pursued a direction straight west for several miles, intending to make a turn and proceed south to the island which was the terminus of her flight. That prolonged the trip somewhat, but she figured it would prove more interesting to the spectators, since for a part of the journey she would be flying parallel with the coast. On the return she planned to run straight back from the island.

When she decided they had reached a point about as far out as was the island, she attempted to make the turn—a mere segment of a circle—but in spite of Steve's warning Orissa was surprised at the stiffness of the steering gear. The engines were working beautifully and developing excellent speed, but the girl found she must apply all her strength to the wheel to make the turn.

She succeeded, and brought the head to bear directly upon the island, but the gear grated and

stuck so persistently that Orissa's effort sent the entire craft careening at a steep angle. Sybil gave a gasp and clung to the supporting rods and both girls heard a loud "chug" that indicated something was wrong; but the Kane balancing device was so perfect that almost immediately the machine righted itself and regained its equilibrium, darting swiftly and in a straight line in the direction of the island.

"What was it?" asked Sybil, putting her head close to Orissa's to be heard above the whir of the motors behind them.

"The steering gear binds; that's all," was the quiet response. "I think it will work better when we are in the water."

"But what made that noise? Didn't something give way?" persisted Sybil.

"Glance behind us, dear, and see."

Sybil carefully turned so as to examine the parts of the aëroplane.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"Well?" said Orissa.

"That chest that Steve loaded us with. It has broken away from its fastenings and is jammed edge downward against your gear."

Orissa thought about it.

"That's unfortunate," said she. "I suppose

the bolts broke when we tipped so badly. But it hasn't interfered with our engines any."

"No," answered Sybil, still examining the conditions; "but it has interfered seriously with your control, I fear. Both your levers are thrown out of position and even the front elevator bars are badly bent."

For the first time a worried expression appeared on Orissa's face.

"If that is true," she said, "our best plan is to return at once."

"Do," urged Sybil, her dark eyes very serious.

Orissa tried to turn the wheel. It resisted. She applied more strength. Something snapped and the released wheel whirled so freely that the girl nearly lost her seat. Recovering instantly she turned a pale face to her companion and said:

"We're wrecked, Sybil. But don't worry. With the boat under us and in this quiet sea we shall be quite safe."

"I'm not worrying—especially—Ris," was the reply; "but it occurs to me to wonder how you're going to get down to the ocean."

"Why?"

"You can't stop the engines, unless one of us crawls back over the planes."

"I can cut off the spark." She tried it, but the

engines chugged as merrily as before. "Guess there must be a short circuit," gasped Orissa.

"And you can't depress your elevator, I'm sure."

"I'll try it," announced Orissa, grimly.

But the fatal chest balked her attempt. The elevator was steadfastly wedged into its present position; the engines were entirely beyond control and the two helpless girls faced one of the most curious conditions ever known in the history of aviation.

At an altitude of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet from the water the aëroplane sped swiftly on its way, headed a trifle to the west of south. It passed Sealskin Island even while the girls were discussing their dilemma, and stubbornly maintained its unfaltering course. The air conditions were perfect for flying; scarcely a breath of wind was felt; the sky above was blue as azure.

Suddenly Sybil laughed.

"What now?" demanded Orissa.

"I was thinking of the consternation on shore at about this moment," explained Miss Cumberford. "Won't they be amazed to see us continue this course, beyond the island? Not understanding our trouble, Daddy will think we're running away."

"So we are," replied Orissa. "I wish I knew where we are running to."

"I suppose we can't stop till the gasoline gives out," said Sybil.

Orissa shook her head.

"That's what scares me," she admitted. "Even now the Mexican shore is a mere line at the left. We're gradually diverging to a point farther out at sea, and when at last we alight, drained of the last drop of gasoline, how are we to run the boat back?"

"We can't. Steve's wonderful Hy will become a mere floating buoy on the bosom of the rolling blue," responded Sybil lightly. "Oh, I'm so glad I came, Ris! I'd no idea we were going to have such fun."

Orissa did not return her chum's smile.

"Sit still and balance her, Sybil," she said. "I'm going to make an investigation."

Exercising the necessary caution she turned and knelt upon the foot bar, clinging to the seat rail and in this position facing the Aircraft so she could examine its mechanism. Sybil had described the condition of things quite accurately. The engine control was cut off and as the gasoline tanks fed from the rear Orissa had no way of stopping the flow. The steering gear was broken

and the front elevator firmly wedged in position by the chest.

"I wonder if we could manage to move this thing," she said, and getting a hand on one corner of the aluminum chest she gave a tug and tried to raise it. It proved solid and unyielding. Not heavy in itself, or perhaps in its contents, the thing was caught between the rods in such a manner that no strength of the girls, limited in movement as they were, could budge it a particle.

Realizing this, and the folly of leaving the seats to get at the gasoline feed, Orissa resumed her place and faced the inevitable as bravely as she could.

"Steve told me," she said to Sybil, "that the gasoline would last a hundred miles in air and fifty in water; that's at least two hundred miles in an air line. Have you any idea where we shall be by that time?"

"Not the slightest," responded her companion, cheerfully. "Ocean, of course; but latitude and longitude a mystery—and not important, anyhow."

Sybil Cumberford was a reserved and silent girl on most occasions. Few were attracted toward her, on this account. Her dark eyes seemed to regard the world with critical toleration and she gave one the impression of considering herself

quite independent of her fellows. Moreover, Sybil was eccentric in character and prone to do and say things that invoked the grave displeasure of her associates, seeming to delight in confusing and annoying them. But there was a brighter side to this queer girl's nature, which developed only in the society of her trusted friends. On any occasion that demanded courage and resourcefulness she came to the front nobly, and at such times Sybil Cumberford became vivacious, helpful and inspiriting.

Here was such an occasion. Danger was the joy of Sybil's heart and the "breath of her nostrils." Indifferent to the ordinary details of life, any adventure that promised tribulation or disaster was fervently welcomed. Then the girl's spirits rose, her intellect fairly bristled and she developed an animation and joyous exhilaration entirely at variance with her usual demeanor.

So now, as Orissa Kane, a girl of proved courage and undaunted spirit, grew solemn and anxious at the perilous condition that confronted them, Sybil Cumberford became gay and animated.

"It's such an unusual thing, and so wholly unexpected!" she said blithely. "I'm sure, Ris, that no two girls who ever lived—in this world or any other—ever found themselves in a like

dilemma. We're as helpless as babes, chummie dear; only no babes were ever forced to fly, willy nilly, for hundreds of miles through the air to some forlorn spot in the dank, moist ocean."

Orissa let her chatter. She was trying to realize what it might mean to them and how and when, if ever, they might be rescued from their difficulties.

"Our great mistake," continued Sybil, as they swept along, "was in not rigging the machine with a wireless outfit. To be sure, neither of us could operate it; but a wireless, in such a case—if we understood its mysteries—would solve our problem."

"How?" asked Orissa.

"We could call up the shore at San Diego and tell them what's happened, and give them the direction in which we are flying; then they could send a fast steamer for us, or perhaps Madeline Dentry would loan her yacht."

"They may follow us with a steamer, anyhow," said Orissa, thoughtfully. "If we manage to land safely, Sybil—which means if we drop to the water right-side-up—we could float for some days, until we were found and rescued."

"Thirst is a terrible thing, at sea; and hunger is almost as bad."

"But in that dreadful chest, which has caused

all our trouble, Steve told me he had packed provisions. Probably there is water there, too," asserted Orissa, hopefully.

"Yes, Dad said there was lunch for two. Well, that's one good feed we shall have, anyhow, provided the chest doesn't get away from us entirely, and we can manage to open it. In its present position, neither event is at all probable."

She seemed to love to discover and point out the gloomy side of their adventure, that she might exult in the dangers that menaced them.

Meantime, swift and straight as an arrow the Aircraft continued on its course. Not a skip to the engines, not an indication of any sort that the flight would be interrupted as long as a drop of gasoline remained in the tanks. They could only be patient and await the finale as bravely as possible.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST DROP OF GASOLINE

Hour after hour they flew, while each hour seemed, to Orissa, at least, a month in duration. Sybil chatted and laughed, refusing to take their misfortune seriously.

"But," said she, "I'm getting famished. An air-trip always stimulates the appetite and that lunch of Steve's is so very near to us—and yet so far! How did he expect us to get at the repast, anyhow?"

"Why, in water," replied Orissa, "the chest and its contents would be handy enough. I do not think it would be safe for us to creep into the boat underneath us now, for we must maintain the aërial balance; but, even if we could get below, we couldn't open the chest while it is wedged crosswise among the braces and levers."

"All true, milady," commented Sybil, her usually pale cheeks now flushed with excitement. "Our present stunt is to 'sit still and take our medicine,' as the saying goes."

By this time the Mexican coast had vanished

entirely and only the placid blue waters of the Pacific remained visible, even from the altitude of the Aircraft. Once or twice they sighted a small island, bleak and bare, for this part of the ocean is filled with tiny islets, most of which are unfertile and uninhabited. Farther along, in the South Pacific, such islands have verdure and inhabitants.

At about four o'clock a change occurred in the atmospheric conditions. A brisk wind arose, blowing steadily for a time from the southwest and then suddenly developing puffs and eddies that caused the Aircraft to wobble dangerously. One powerful gust seized the helpless flying-machine and whirled it around like a toy balloon, but failed to destroy its equilibrium because the girls balanced it with their bodies as well as they might. When their craft was released, however, it pointed in a new direction—this time straight west. An hour later a similar gust swept its head to the southward, and in this direction it was still flying when the red sun dipped into the water and twilight fell.

"I don't like this, Syb," said Orissa, anxiously. "If the gasoline holds out much longer it will be dark, and when we drop our danger will be doubled."

"What will be the fashion of our dropping, anyhow?" asked Sybil. "We can't volplane, with

no control of the rudder. Chances are, dear, the thing will just tip over and spill us in the damp."

"Hold fast, if it does that," cautioned Orissa. "If we become separated from the boat we will drown like rats. The engine may swamp the boat, in any event, but it has air compartments which will keep it afloat under any favorable conditions, and we must trust to luck, Sybil—and to our own coolness."

"All right, Ris. A watery grave doesn't appeal to me just now," was the reply. "I'm too hungry to drown comfortably, and that's a fact. On a full stomach I imagine one could face perpetual soaking with more complacency."

"Huh!" cried Orissa. "Listen!"

Sybil was already listening, fully as alert as her chum. The speed of the engine was diminishing. Gradually the huge propeller slackened its rapid revolutions, while its former roar subsided to a mere moan.

"Thank goodness," said Sybil, fervently, "the gasoline is gone at last!"

"Look out, then," warned Orissa.

With a final, reluctant "chug-chug!" the engine stopped short. Like a huge gull the frail craft remained poised in the air a moment and then a sudden light breeze swept it on. It was falling, however, impelled by its own weight, and singu-

larly enough it reversed its position and proceeded before the wind with the stern foremost.

Splash! It wasn't so bad, after all. Not a volplane, to be sure, but a gentle drop, the weight of the heavy engine sustained by the "air-cushions" formed beneath the planes.

Orissa wiped the spray from her eyes.

"That would have been a regular bump, on land," Sybil was saying affably, "but the old ocean has received us with gracious tenderness. Are we sinking, Ris, or do we float?"

How suddenly the darkness was falling! Orissa leaned from her seat and found the water had turned to a color nearly as black as ink. Beneath her the bow of the aluminum motor boat was so depressed that it was almost even with the water and as it bobbed up and down with the waves it was shipping the inky fluid by the dipperful.

She scrambled out of the seat, then, to step gingerly over the unlucky chest and crouch upon a narrow seat of the little boat, near the stern.

"Come, Sybil," she called; "and be very careful."

Sybil promptly descended to the boat, which now rode evenly upon the waves. In this position the propeller was just under water and the engine rested over the center of the light but strong little craft. But propeller and engine were alike use-

less to them now. Overhead the planes spread like huge awnings, but they carried so little weight that they did not affect the balance of the boat.

"Steve planned well," murmured Orissa, with a sigh. "If only he had never thought of that dreadful chest, we would not be in this fix."

As she spoke she kicked the chest a little resentfully with her foot, and it seemed to move. Sybil leaned forward to eye it as closely as the gathering darkness would allow.

"Why, Ris," she exclaimed, "the thing has come loose. Help me to tip it up."

Between them they easily raised the chest to its former position, where it rested just before them. Steve had bolted it at either end, but one of the bolts had broken away and the other had bent at almost a right angle. Perhaps this last bolt would have broken, too, had not the chest, in falling, become wedged against the braces.

"This horrid box has heretofore been our dire enemy," remarked Sybil; "but let us be forgiving and encourage it to make amends—for it holds eatables. How does the cover open, Ris?"

Stephen had shown Orissa how to work the sliding catch and in a moment the girl had the lid open and held it upright while Sybil searched within.

"Hooray! We've discovered a regular cafe-

teria," said the latter, jubilantly, as she drew out a number of parcels. "I was afraid we'd have to nibble, Orissa, so as not to gorge ourselves to-night and starve to-morrow; but I reckon there's enough to last two delicate girls like us a week. What shall we tackle first?"

"Let us plan a little, dear," suggested Orissa, restraining her own eagerness, for she was hungry, too. "We cannot possibly tell to-night what this precious chest contains or how much food there really is. We must wait for daylight to take an inventory. But here are some tins, we know, which will keep, and that package of sandwiches on your lap is perishable; so I propose we confine our feast to those for to-night."

"Perishable it is, Cap'n," answered Sybil, consuming half a sandwich at a single bite. "If there's only a pickle to go with these breadspreads I shall be content. It's not only luncheon that we're indulging in, you know; it's our regular dinner, as well, and there ought to be two courses—pickles and sandwiches—at the least."

"You must feel for the pickles, then," returned Orissa, intent upon her own sandwich, "for it's too dark to use eyes just now."

Sybil found the pickles—who ever put up a lunch for two girls without including pickles?—and declared she was quite content.

"If we hadn't discovered the eats, my dear Cap'n," she remarked with cheery satisfaction, "I think I could have dined on my own shoes. That's a happy thought; we'll keep the shoes in reserve. I'd no idea one's appetite could get such an edge, after being tantalized for a few hours."

"Do you realize, Sybil," asked Orissa in a grave tone, as she took her second sandwich, "that we must pass the night in this wiggly, insecure boat?"

"What's insecure about it?" demanded Sybil.

"It won't stand much of a sea, I fear. This attachment to the Aircraft was intended for pleasant weather."

"All right; the weather's delightful. Those long, gentle rolls will merely rock us to sleep. And—Oh, Ris!—we'll have rolls for breakfast."

"Do be serious, Syb! Suppose a storm catches us before morning?"

"Then please wake me up. Where do you suppose we are, anyhow?"

"I've no idea," answered Orissa, soberly. "We must have traveled a couple of hundred miles, but it wasn't in a straight line, by any means. Let's see. Perhaps a hundred miles on our first course—over Sealskin Island and nearly south—then forty or fifty miles north——"

"Oh, no; west."

"Yes; so it was. Then twenty-odd miles south, ten miles or so east, a couple or three miles west again, and then—and then——"

"Dear me! Don't bother your head with it, Orissa. We zigzagged like a drunken man. The only fact we can positively nail is that we were getting farther away from home—or our friends, rather—every minute. That's a bad thing, come to think of it. They'll never know where to search for us."

"True," responded Orissa. "But I am sure they will search, and search diligently, so we must manage to keep afloat until they find us. What shall we do now, Sybil?"

"Sleep," was the prompt reply. "If we lift this seat off—it seems to be removable—I think there is room enough for us both to cuddle down in the bottom of the boat."

"Oh, Sybil!" This from Orissa, rather reproachfully.

"Well, I can't imagine anything more sensible to do," asserted her chum, with a yawn. "These air-rides not only encourage hunger, but sleep. Did you cork that bottle of water? I want another drink."

"I—I think we'd better economize on the water," suggested Orissa, "at least until morn-

ing, when we can find out if there's any more in the chest."

"All right. Help me bail out this overflow and then we'll cuddle down."

"Steve said there were two blankets in the chest," said Orissa, presently, when the bottom of the boat was dry. "I'll search for them."

She found the blankets easily, by feeling through the contents of the chest. Offering no further objection to Sybil's plan, she prepared their bed for the night. Neither of these girls had ever "roughed it" to any extent, but in spite of the peril of their situation and the liability of unforeseen dangers overtaking them, they were resourceful enough and courageous enough to face the conditions with a degree of intrepid interest. Afloat on an unknown part of the broad Pacific, with merely a tiny aluminum boat for protection, with final escape from death uncertain and chances of rescue remote, these two carefully nurtured young girls, who had enjoyed loving protection all their lives, were so little influenced by fear that they actually exchanged pleasantries as they spread their blankets and rolled themselves in the coverings for the night.

"The lack of a pillow bothers me most," remarked Sybil. "I think I shall rest my head on one of those cans of baked beans."

"I advise you not to; you might eat them in your sleep," was Orissa's comment.

"May I rest my head upon you, chummie dear?"

"You may not. Try the engine."

"That's hard. And there are enough wheels in my head already, without pounding my ear with them. Suggest something else."

"Your own elbow, then."

"Thanks, dear. Where's that slab of aluminum that used to be a seat?"

It was a happy thought and furnished them both with a headrest. The seat was not an ideal pillow, but it answered the purpose because there was nothing better.

CHAPTER VI

CASTAWAYS

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Orissa, sitting up.

After a moment Sybil said, sleepily:

"Go ahead and declare it, Ris. Only, if we're drowned, please break the news to me gently!"

"How strange!" muttered Orissa, still staring.

Sybil stirred, threw off the blanket and also rose to a sitting position.

"If it's a secret," she began, "then—Oh, goodness me!"

During the night the boat with its great overhead planes had gently floated into a little bay, where the water was peaceful as a millpond. Two points of black rock projected on either side of them, outlining the bay. Between these points appeared an island—a mass of tumbled rocks guiltless of greenery. There was a broad strip of clean, smooth sand on the shore, barely covering the slaty ledge, but back of that the jumble of rocks began, forming irregular hillocks, and beyond these hillocks, which extended for some distance inland, there seemed to be a great dip in the land-

scape—or rockscape—far back of which arose a low mountain formed of the same unlovely material as all else.

"It's an island!" gasped Sybil, rubbing her eyes to make sure they were working properly. "Now, see here, Cap'n Ris, I want it understood right now which one of us is to be Robinson Crusoe and which the Man Friday. Seems to me, I being the passenger and you the charioteer, the prestige is on my side; so I claim the Crusoe part. I can't grow whiskers, and I'm not likely to find a parrot to perch on my shoulder, but I'll promise to enact the part as well as circumstances will permit."

"I can't see a sign of life," announced Orissa, regretfully. "There isn't even a bird hovering over the place."

"Lizards and snakes among the rocks, though, I'll bet," responded Sybil, with a grimace. "All these rocky Pacific islands are snaky, they say. I wonder if I can learn to charm 'em. You don't object to my being Crusoe, do you?"

Orissa sighed; then she turned to her cheery comrade with a smile.

"Not at all," said she. "But I'll be Columbus, the Discoverer, for I've discovered a desert island while you were peacefully dreaming."

"There's no desert about your island," stated Sybil. "A desert would be a relief. What you've

discovered, Miss Ris Columbus—or what's discovered us, rather—is a rock heap."

"Desert or not, it's deserted, all right," maintained Orissa.

"And you may not have discovered it, after all," said Sybil, musingly examining the place. "These seas have been pretty well explored, I guess, and although no nation would particularly care to pin a flag to this bunch of rocks, the maps may indicate it clearly."

"Ah, if we only had a map!" cried Orissa eagerly.

"What good would it do us?" asked Sybil. "It couldn't help us to find ourselves, for we don't know what especial dot on the map we've arrived at. With Muggins' Complete Atlas in hand, and a geography teacher thrown in, we wouldn't be able to pick out this island from the ones that litter these seas."

"That is, unfortunately, quite true," sighed Orissa; "and anyhow it's not worth an argument because we have no map. But we must be up and doing, Sybil. If we are to keep ourselves alive, we must take advantage of every favorable circumstance."

"What time is it?" yawned Sybil.

Orissa looked at her watch.

"A little after six."

"Call me at eight. I can't get up at six o'clock; it's too early, entirely."

"But you went to bed at about seven."

"Did I? Well, how about breakfast?"

"We must inspect our stores and take inventory. Then we must plan to make the provisions last as long as possible."

"How dreadful! Why, this is a real adventure, Ris—threatened famine, and all that. We're regular castaways, like we read about in the fifteen-cent story magazines, and I wouldn't be surprised if we had to endure many inconveniences; would you?"

"Sybil," said Orissa earnestly, "we are face to face with privation, danger, and perhaps death. I'm glad you can be cheerful, but we must understand our terrible position and endeavor to survive as long as possible. We know very well that our friends will have a hard time finding us, for they cannot guess what part of the ocean we descended in. It may take days—perhaps weeks—for them to discover us in this dreary place, and meantime we must guard our safety to the best of our ability."

"Naturally," agreed Sybil, duly impressed by this speech. "Your head is clearer and better than mine, Orissa; so you shall take command, and I'll gladly follow your instructions. You mean

to land, don't you? I'm tired of this cramped little boat and even a rocky island is better than no refuge at all."

"Of course we must land," replied Orissa; "and that, I think, must be our first task. The shore is only a stone's throw from here, but we're fast on a sand bar, and how to get off is a problem."

Sybil began to take off her leggings, then her shoes and stockings.

"We'll wade," she said.

Orissa peered over the side.

"It's very shallow. I think we can wade to shore, Syb, and pull the Hy in after us. We must get the whole thing high and dry on the beach, if possible."

Sybil plumbed the water by tying a can of sardines to a cord from around one of the parcels.

"I guess we can make it all right, Cap'n," she said. "It's not very deep."

"It may be a lot deeper closer in. But I guess we'll have to take a chance on it. And if the worst comes to the worst we *can* dry our clothes on the beach."

The sun was showing brilliantly above the horizon as the two girls stepped into the water. Both could swim fairly well, but where the boat was grounded on the sand bar the water was scarcely knee-deep. They dragged Steve's invention over

the bar with little difficulty, the wheels materially assisting their efforts. Beyond the bar the water deepened in spots, and once, as they drew the wrecked Hy after them, the waves reached perilously high. Then they struck the shelving beach and found hard sand under their feet.

By pushing and hauling energetically they managed to run the boat, with its attached planes, to the shore, where the wheels on either side enabled them to roll it up the slope until, as Orissa said, it was "high and dry."

"Seems to me," remarked Sybil, panting, "we ought to have breakfasted first, for all this exercise has made me ravenous. That'll diminish our precious store of eatables considerably, I fear."

With the machine safely landed they proceeded to dress themselves, after which Orissa arranged upon the sand the entire contents of the aluminum chest. A kit of tools, adapted for use on the Aircraft, together with some extra bolts, a strut or two and a coil of steel wire were first placed carefully on one side.

"With these," said the girl, "I can easily repair the damage to our machine."

"But what's the use, without gasoline?" asked Sybil.

Orissa had no reply to this. She proceeded to inspect the provisions. Mr. Cumberford had a

way of always providing enough for a regiment when he intended to feed a few, so in ordering lunch for two girls on an aërial voyage his usual prodigality had been in evidence. Perhaps with an intuition that a delay or even an accident might occur to Sybil and Orissa, the old gentleman had even exceeded his record, in this instance. A big box of dainty sandwiches had been supplemented by three cartons of biscuits, a whole Edam cheese, a bottle of pickles, two huge packages of cakes and eighteen tins of provisions, provided with keys for opening them. These consisted of sardines, potted ham and chicken, baked beans, chipped beef and the like. In another parcel was a whole roasted duck, in still another an apple pie, while two jars of jam completed the list of edibles. For the voyagers to drink Mr. Cumberford had added two half-gallon jars of distilled water, a bottle of grape juice, two of ginger ale and one of lemonade.

The girls examined this stock with profound gravity.

"I wish," said Orissa, "there had been more bread and biscuits, for we are going to need the substantials rather more than the delicacies."

"Thank goodness we have anything!" exclaimed Sybil. "I suppose we must breakfast on

the cakes and jam, and save the other truck until later."

"That's the idea," approved Orissa. "The cakes won't keep for long; even the sandwiches will outlast them, I think."

"True, if I eat all the cake I want," added Sybil. "Cakes and jam make a queer breakfast, Orissa. In New England the pie would be appropriate."

"Let's save the pie—for lunch."

"Agreed. Breakfast isn't usually my strong point, you know."

As they ate, seated together upon the sands, they cast many curious glances at the interior of the island—a prospect forbidding enough.

"Do you know," said Orissa, "the scarcity of food doesn't worry me so much as the scarcity of water. Grape juice and ginger ale are well enough in their way, but they don't take the place of water."

"We may possibly find water on this island," replied Sybil, after a little thought.

"I don't believe it. I've an idea that, hunt as we may, we shall find nothing more than rocks, and rocks, and rocks—anywhere and everywhere."

"That's merely a hunch, and I distrust hunches. It will be better to explore," suggested Sybil.

"Yes; I think we ought to do that. But—the snakes."

"Ah, the exclusive rock theory is already exploded," said Sybil, with a laugh. "Yet even snakes can't exist without water, can they? Just the thought of the wrigglers makes me shudder, but if they are really our co-inhabitants here we won't be safe from them even on this shore. Have we anything in the way of clubs?"

Orissa considered the question. Then she went to the machine and with a wrench unfastened the foot-bar, which was long enough to extend across both seats and was made of solid steel. She also took the bolts out of one of the levers, which when released became an effective weapon of defense. Thus armed, and feeling somewhat more secure, the girls prepared to move inland to explore their new habitation.

They found the climb over the loose rocks adjoining the shore to be quite arduous, and aside from the difficulties of the way they had to exercise constant caution for fear of snakes. They saw none of these dreaded reptiles, however, and when they came to the hillocks they selected a path between the two most promising and began the ascent, keeping close together. So jagged were the tumbled masses of rock and so irregular in their formation that it was not a question of

walking so much as crawling, but with their leggings, stout shoes and thick cloth skirts they were fairly protected from injury.

The silence throughout the island was intense. The girls spoke in hushed tones, awed by their uncanny surroundings. From a clear sky the sun beat down upon their heads and was refracted from the rocks until the heat was oppressive. Added to this a pungent, unrecognized odor saluted their nostrils as they progressed inland. "Reminds me of the smell of a drug store," asserted Sybil; but Orissa replied: "It's more like the smell of a garage, I think."

After a long and weary climb they reached the brow of the rock hills and were able to look down into the "dip" or valley which lay between them and the mountain. The center of the depression, which was three or four miles across, appeared to be quite free from rocks except in a few places where one cropped up in the form of a hummock. Elsewhere the surface seemed smooth and moist, for it was covered with an oozy, stagnant slime which was decidedly repulsive in appearance.

Looking beyond this forbidding valley they discovered the first interesting thing they had yet observed. At the right base of the far-away mountain, lying between it and the sea, was a patch of vivid green, crowning an elevation that

distinctly separated it from the central depression of the island. It might be grass or underbrush, this alluring greenery, but in any event it proved a grateful sight to eyes wearied by the dull waste of rocks. From the point where the girls stood they could also see the top of a palm tree which grew around the edge of the mountain.

"Well!" said Orissa, drawing a long breath, "there is the first sign of life—animal or vegetable—we have found in this wilderness. That tree must indicate water, Sybil."

"Whatever it indicates," was the reply, "yonder bluff is a better place for our camp than the bay where we floated ashore. How shall we get to it, though? It will be a heart-breaking climb cross-lots over these interminable rocks."

"An impossible climb," Orissa agreed. "I think our best plan will be to go around the island, following the sandy beach. It seems from here as if that bluff drops sheer down to the sea, but it will be much easier for us to climb a bluff than to navigate these rocks. Let's go back and try it."

Cautiously and laboriously they made their way back to the beach, feeling considerably cheered by what they had seen and reassured by the total absence of the dreaded "wigglers." After resting a little from their exertions they prepared for

the more important journey of discovery. Sybil carried some food and the bottle of lemonade, while Orissa secured two straps from the aëroplane and the coil of wire. Then, still armed with their steel bars, they set out along the beach.

Their first task was to climb the rocks of the point which formed the bay, where it jutted out from the shore. This being accomplished they encountered another stretch of smooth beach, which gradually circled around the north end of the island. Here it was easy walking and they made good progress, but the coast line was so irregular that it wound in and out continually, and in places huge boulders interrupted their passage and obliged them either to climb or wade, whichever seemed the most desirable.

"Already," sighed Sybil, "we have tramped a thousand miles. Did you mark that place, Orissa, so we will know when we come to it?"

"Yes; I can tell it by the position of the sun. That side of the island faces the northwest."

"And we haven't passed it?"

"No; but we must be drawing near to it. I've been looking for the bluff the last half hour. The green place was quite elevated, you remember, and must be well above the sea level. Look ahead; you'll notice the rocks are gradually rising, from here on."

Sybil nodded and again they trudged on. As the rocks grew higher at their left, the girls kept to the narrow strip of beach, which was beginning to be washed by an occasional wave.

"The tide is rising," announced Orissa; "but we shall be at the bluff very soon, and can then climb above this moisture. Feet wet, Syb?"

"Pickled in brine. Wet feet signify a cold; cold signifies la grippe; la grippe signifies a doctor; the doctor signifies a depleted bank account. Science of deduction, Ris. It's only a step from wet feet to poverty."

"I prefer a doctor to an undertaker," said Orissa, "but as neither profession is represented here I advise you to forego the pleasure of taking cold."

"Right you are, Cap'n Columbus. No doctor, no cold. Banish the thought! We can't afford the luxury of illness, can we? Oh, here's the bluff."

There it was, indeed; but absolutely unclimbable. It was sixty feet high, at least, and overhanging the sea like a shelf, the waves having cut it away at the base.

"Now, then," said Orissa, after a careful inspection, "we must either go back or go on, in order to find a way up. As we haven't passed any

steps or easy inclines, I propose we advance farther and see what the west end looks like."

"I'll follow the leader; but the waves are already covering the beach," asserted Sybil, with a grimace.

"Then let us wade; and don't lose any precious time, for the tide will come in faster every minute. Shoes off, Crusoe!"

"Aye, aye, Columbus."

With shoes, leggings and stockings in hand they began the advance, hugging the wall of rock and proceeding as swiftly as they could. At times one or the other would cry out as she stepped on a sharp bit of rock, but this was no time to shrink from petty trials and they bore up with admirable fortitude.

CHAPTER VII

TWO GIRLS AND ONE ISLAND

Plodding along the narrow ledge of beach and constantly soused by the waves, the girls began to fear, as afterward proved to be fact—that the bluff covered the entire west end of the island. The water beneath their feet grew deeper and the undertow stronger with every step they advanced, but fortunately for their safety they finally came to a crevasse that split the bluff in twain, and down this rift trickled a rill of pure water.

They both exclaimed with delight as they crept into the shelter of the crevasse. The fissure was not level, but extended upward at an acute angle, yet there was room enough at its mouth for the girls to creep above the wash of the waves. Examining the place carefully, Orissa thought they might be able to follow the rift up to the top of the bluff, and so at once they began the ascent. The two walls were so close together that they could touch both by extending their arms, and there was room, by stepping occasionally into the

shallow brook, for them to climb from shelf to shelf without much difficulty. At the very top, however, they were brought to an abrupt halt. A waterfall leaped from the edge of the bluff, dropping a good ten feet to the point they had now reached, from whence there seemed no way of gaining the top.

Orissa and Sybil looked at each other and laughed, the spray from the waterfall wetting their cheeks, which were now rosy from exercise.

"Trapped, Cap'n!" cried Sybil, merrily. "What next?"

"We can't go back, you know."

"Not unless we prefer Davy Jones' locker to this stronghold—which I, for one, don't. Therefore, let's eat."

"That seems your resource in every emergency, Sybil."

"Naturally. Feasting stimulates thought; thought develops wit; wit finds a way."

Orissa raised herself to a seat upon a projecting crag and then, swinging her feet, proceeded to think while Sybil brought out the food.

"Could you climb a wire, Syb?"

"Not without years of practice. Have you positively decided to establish a circus in these wilds, Ris?"

Orissa stood upon the crag, examined the face

of the rock and then drove the end of the bar she carried into a small fissure that was nearly on a level with her head. Sybil observed the horizontal bar and laughed gleefully.

"Have a sandwich, chummie, and curb your imagination," said she. "I catch your idea, but respectfully decline to accept the hazard."

Orissa ate her sandwich and drank from the bottle of lemonade. Then she rinsed her fingers in the brook, dried them on her handkerchief and again mounted the crag.

"Listen, Crusoe: I'm going to make an attempt to break out of jail," she said impressively. "If I can reach to the top I'll find some way to get you up. As soon as I get my feet on that bar, you are to come up on this crag and hand me your lever. If I can find a pocket to stick that into, the deed is done."

"Bravo, Ris! What a pity you haven't any spangles on your skirt. If you fall, fall gradually, for I'll be afraid to catch you."

Orissa's fingers clutched at the rough projections of rock and with some difficulty she gained a footing on the bar. Then, still clinging to the face of the rift, she made a further examination. There seemed a small hole at the right, about breast high, and she called for the lever. This Sybil promptly passed up. Orissa thrust in the

lever and the next instant nearly lost her footing, for with a bewildering hoot a white owl of monstrous size fluttered out and tumbled almost at Sybil's feet, who uttered a shriek like an Indian war whoop. The creature was blinded by the glare of day and went whirling down the incline of the crevasse until it was lost to sight.

"First sign of life," called Sybil. "Don't look so scared, Ris; there's nothing more harmless than an owl."

"Did you yell because *I* was scared?" inquired Orissa.

"No, I was reproving the owl, who has a voice like a steam calliope. It would take more than a blind bird to scare either of us; wouldn't it, Cap'n?"

"I—I wish it hadn't been so—so unexpected," muttered Orissa, feeling her way up to the second projection. With her feet on the lever she found her head well above the edge of the precipice and the first glance showed her a good hold for her hands.

Orissa Kane was no skilled athlete, but her experience in Steve's workshop, together with her aërial exercises and constant outdoor life, had given her well developed muscles which now stood her in good stead. She drew herself up, got her knee on the edge of the rock, and a moment later

was on level ground at the top of the bluff. Then she leaned over and called to Sybil:

"Can you manage it?"

"What a question!" retorted Sybil, indignantly. "I stood below to catch you in case you slipped; but who is there to catch *me,* I beg to inquire?"

"The owl," said Orissa. "Will you try it?"

"Is it worth while? Tell me what you've found up there."

Orissa turned and examined the scene now spread before her.

"Better come up, Syb," she said. "But wait a moment and I'll help you."

She attached one of the straps to the coil of steel wire and passed the end down to her chum.

"Buckle the strap around you—just under your arms," she called. "I'll hold fast the wire at this end. You can't fall, then; but be careful, just the same."

With this support Sybil gained confidence. Exercising extreme caution she followed Orissa's example in scaling the cliff and as fast as she mounted her companion took up the slack in the wire and kept it taut. As soon as Sybil stood on the upper bar Orissa grasped her arms and drew her up beside her in safety.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Where

there's a will, there's a way. It wasn't such a difficult feat, after all."

"There isn't enough money in the world to hire me to do it again," panted Sybil, trembling a little from the giddy experience.

"That may be true, but if our safety requires it we may repeat the performance more than once," declared Orissa. "Unfortunately, we have lost our weapons of defense."

"Can't we recover the bars?"

"Not without going down for them. If you think you could lower me over the edge——"

"I just couldn't, Ris. Don't mention it."

"Very well; then we will proceed unarmed. Look, Sybil! Isn't it a glorious prospect?"

"In point of comparison, yes," admitted Sybil, speaking slowly as she gazed around her.

They were standing on a level table-land which lay between the base of the mountain and the sea. The "mountain" was really a great hill of rock, rising only a hundred and fifty feet or so from the table-land. The level space before them was clothed with a queer sort of verdure. It was not grass, but plants with broad and rather crinkly leaves, so tender that wherever the girls stepped the leaves were broken and crushed. Nor was the color an emerald green; it was rather a pale pea-green and the plants grew not in soil but

sprang from tiny cracks and fissures in a sort of shale, or crushed slate, which was constantly kept moist by the seepage of the little stream.

The island here made an abrupt curve to the west and a little farther along the girls saw patches of bushes and several small groups of tall, tropical trees, resembling plantains, or palms. There were vines, too, which grew in rank profusion among the rocks and helped relieve the dismal landscape by their greenery. But nowhere appeared any earth, or natural soil; whatever grew, grew among the crushed rock, or shale, which semed to possess a certain fertility where moisture reached it.

"This part of the island seems by far the best," asserted Sybil. "Let us explore it thoroughly."

They set out to skirt the edge of the bluff and on reaching the first group of trees found they were bananas. Several bunches of plump fruit hung far up among the branches, quite out of reach.

"We'll find a way to get at them if we are detained here long enough to need them," said Orissa.

A half mile beyond the place where they had so laboriously climbed the bluff they came upon a broad ravine which led directly down to the water's edge. It appeared as if a huge mass of

rock had at some time become detached from the mountain and, sliding downward, had cut away the bluff and hurled itself into the sea, where it now lay a few rods from the water's edge and formed a sort of breakwater. The swirl of the waves around this mass of rock had made a small indentation in the shore, creating a tiny bay with a sandy beach.

"Ah," said Orissa, examining this place, "here is where we must establish our camp; there is room enough to float our boat into the bay, where the water is calm, and on that smooth beach I can repair the Hy at my leisure."

"Also, from this elevation," added Sybil, "we can fly a flag of distress, which would be seen by any ship approaching the island."

Orissa nodded approval.

"Here is also water and food," said she. "If we can manage to navigate the Hy to this place we have little to fear from a temporary imprisonment."

"We must wait for low tide before we start back," observed Sybil. "Meantime, let's run down to the beach and see how it looks."

The descent to the water's edge was easy, and they found the little bay ideal for their purpose. But they could hear the waves breaking with some force against the face of the cliff, just outside their

retreat, and it would be hours before they might venture to return to the other side of the island.

So again they ascended the bluff and selected a place for their camp, beneath the spreading foliage of the tall bananas. Afterward they sought the source of the little brook, which was high up on the mountain and required a difficult climb to reach it. A spring seemed to well up, clear and refreshing, from a cleft in the rock, but even at its source there was no more water than would run from an ordinary house faucet.

"Isn't it astonishing," said Orissa, "how much moisture is dispersed from this tiny stream? I think it never rains here and this spring of water supplies all the island."

"This part of it, anyhow. It's mighty lucky for us the babbling brook is here," declared Sybil, drinking deeply of the cool water and then bathing her heated brow with it. "But what stumps me, Ris, is the lack of any life on the island. With water and green stuff both animals and birds might thrive here—to say nothing of bugs and lizards and serpents galore—yet aside from that great white owl we've not seen a living thing."

"It really *is* curious," admitted Orissa. Then, turning her gaze seaward, she exclaimed: "See there, Sybil! Isn't that another island?"

"It surely is," was the reply; "and only a few

miles away. It's a big island, too, Ris—far bigger than this. Did you bring along your glasses?"

"No; they are in the boat."

"When we get them we can inspect that island better. Perhaps we could manage to get to it, Ris."

"We'll see," was the doubting answer. "I imagine, if that island is so much larger, and proves to be more fertile than this, that we have discovered the reason why the live things, such as birds and animals, prefer it as a place of residence."

They made their way back to the bluff and waited patiently for the tide to ebb. According to Orissa's watch it was quite four o'clock before they deemed it safe to venture on the sands, and even then they went barefooted, as an occasional wave still crossed their narrow path.

By the time they reached the bay and their boat the two girls were very tired with their long tramp and as it was nearly sundown they decided to spend the night in this location and make the attempt to shift camp next day.

CHAPTER VIII

AN OWL CONCERT

While daylight lasted Orissa was busy examining the injury to the Aircraft and attempting a few preliminary repairs. Her long mechanical experience in the workshop with her brother enabled her to determine accurately what was required to put the machine into proper working order, and she thought she could accomplish the task.

"I can't see that it matters, anyhow," said Sybil, watching her chum from a seat upon the sands. "We can't fly, and the boat is our only refuge. Even that we must manage to row or sail in some way."

"All very true," returned Orissa, "but I can see no object in neglecting these repairs when I am able to make them. I can take off the bent elevator rods and straighten them, after which the elevator and rudder may assist us in sailing, as we can oppose them to the wind. The engine control is a more serious matter, for the wheel connection was broken off short. But I shall take

a rod from a support and fit it in place and then replace the support with our steel wire. That is a sort of makeshift and will require time and nice adjustment, but I can do it, all right. The tools Steve supplied were quite complete; there's even a box marked 'soldering outfit.' "

"Is there?" asked Sybil, eagerly. "See if any matches are in it, Ris."

"Matches?"

"Yes. The lack of matches has disturbed me considerably."

"Why, Syb?"

"We can't cook without them."

"Cook! why, I never thought of such a thing," said Orissa, truly astonished. "What is there to cook, in this place?"

"Fish," answered Sybil.

"And what would you use for fuel?"

"Fuel?"

"Yes; what is there to make a fire with?"

"Never mind that. Just see about the matches."

Orissa opened the soldering case and found an alcohol torch, a flask of alcohol, solder, acid and a box of matches.

"Good!" cried Sybil, joyfully. "Don't you dare do any wasteful soldering, Orissa Kane. Save every drop of that alcohol to cook with."

Orissa laughed.

"I have nothing to solder, just yet," said she. "And you've nothing to fry."

"I soon shall have, though," was the confident reply. "We've assured ourselves of one thing, Miss Columbus, and that is that we can sustain life, in case of necessity, on bananas and spring water. So I propose we have one good, luxuriant square meal this evening by way of variety. We've done nothing but lunch for two whole days and I want something hot."

"I'm willing, Sybil. Can you catch a fish?"

"If there's one in our neighborhood. I'll try it while you are tinkering."

Among the tools was a ball of stout cord, and for hook Sybil cut a short length of wire and bent it into shape with a pair of nippers, filing a sharp point to it. Then she opened a can of chipped beef and secured a couple of slices for bait. Going to the point of rock she found a place on the ocean side where a projecting shelf afforded her a seat above fairly deep water, and here she dropped her line.

Mr. Cumberford was an enthusiastic fisherman and while Sybil had never cared particularly for the sport she had accompanied her father on many a piscatorial expedition.

A tug. The girl hauled in, hand over hand, and found she had captured a large crab, which

dropped from the hook to the rocks and with prodigious speed made for the water and disappeared.

"Good riddance, old ugly!" laughed Sybil.

Scarcely had she thrown her line when another tug came. A second crab floundered upon the rocks, but fell upon his back and lay struggling to turn himself.

Sybil ruefully contemplated the empty hook.

"I can't feed all our good beef to horrid crabs," she exclaimed; "but the beef seems a good bait and I'll try again."

Another crab. Orissa came clambering over the rocks to her friend's side. The sun was sinking.

"What luck, Syb?"

"Only three crabs. I'm afraid it's too shallow here for fish."

Orissa leaned over the still struggling crab—the only one that had not escaped.

"Why, we pay big money in Los Angeles for these things," said she. "They're delicious eating; but they have to be boiled, I think, and then cracked and newburged or creamed."

"Keep an eye on the rascal, then," said Sybil. "Can't he be eaten just boiled?"

"Yes; with mayonnaise."

"There's none handy. Let the high-brow go,

and we'll fish for something that doesn't require royal condiments."

But Orissa weighted the crab with a heavy stone, to hold him down. Then she sat beside Sybil and watched her.

"I'm afraid our fish dinner must be postponed," began Miss Cumberford, sorrowfully; but at that moment the line jerked so fiercely that she would have been pulled from her seat had not Orissa made a grab and rescued her. Then they both clung to the line, managing to draw it in by degrees until there leaped from the water a great silvery fish which promptly dove again, exhibiting a strength that nearly won for him his freedom.

"Hold fast!" gasped Sybil, exerting all her strength. "We mustn't let him escape."

The fish, a twelve-pound rockcod, made a desperate fight; but unfortunately for him he had swallowed the entire hook and so his conquest was certain if the girls could hold on to the line. At last he lay flopping upon the rocks, and seeing he was unable to disgorge the hook, they dragged him to the beach, where Orissa shut her eyes and beheaded him with a hatchet from the tool chest.

In the outfit of the chest, which had evidently been intended by Steve and Mr. Cumberford for regular use in connection with the Hydro-Air-

craft, they had found two aluminum plates, as well as knives and forks and spoons. Sybil cut two generous slices from the big fish and laid them upon one of the metal plates. Then they opened a can of pork and beans and secured a lump of fat to use in frying. Orissa lighted the alcohol torch and Sybil arranged some loose rocks so that they would support the plate suspended above the flame of the torch. The intense heat melted the fat and the fish was soon fried to a lovely brown. They ate it with biscuits and washed it down with ginger ale, confiding the while to one another that never had they eaten a meal so delicious.

They let the torch flicker during the repast, for night had fallen, but when from motives of economy Orissa had extinguished the flame they found a dim light suffused from a myriad of stars. Later a slender crescent moon arose, so they were able to distinguish near-by objects, even with the shadow of the bleak mountain behind them.

They had arranged their blankets in the boat and were sitting upon them, talking together in the starlight, when suddenly an unearthly cry smote their ears, followed by an answering shriek —then another, and another—until the whole island seemed echoing with a thousand terrifying whoops.

"Ku-whoo-woo-oo-oo! Ku-whoo! Ku-whoo-oo!"

The two girls clung together tremblingly as the great chorus burst upon them; but after a moment Sybil pushed her companion away with a nervous little laugh.

"Owls!" she exclaimed.

"Oh!" said Orissa, relieved as the truth dawned upon her. "I—I thought it was savages."

"So it is. I challenge any beings to yell more savagely than those fearful hoot owls. Something must have happened to them, Ris, for they've never made a mutter all day long."

"Because they have been asleep," answered Orissa. They had to speak loudly to be heard above the turmoil of shrieks, although the owls seemed mainly congregated upon the distant mountain. The rocks everywhere were full of them, however, and hoots and answering hoots resounded from every part of the island. It was fairly deafening, as well as annoying and uncanny. They waited in vain for the noise to subside.

"There must be thousands of them," observed Sybil. "What's the row about, do you suppose?"

"Perhaps it's their nature to, Syb. I wonder why we didn't hear the pests last night. When we wakened this morning all was silent as the grave."

"I think we floated into the bay about daylight, when all the big-eyes had ducked into their holes. Do you know, Ris, the owls must be responsible for the absence of all other life on the island? They dote on snakes and lizards and beetles and such, and they'd rob the nests of any other birds, who couldn't protect themselves in the nighttime. So I suppose they've either eaten up all the other creatures or scared them to death."

"That must be so. But, oh, Sybil! if this racket keeps up every night how are we going to be able to sleep?"

"Ah. Just inquire, Cap'n, and if you find out, let me know," replied Sybil, yawning. "I got up so early this morning that I'm dead for sleep this blessed minute."

"Lie down; I'll keep watch."

"Thank you. This lullaby is too entrancing to miss."

The air grew cool presently, as it often does at night in the semi-tropics, and the two girls crouched down and covered themselves to their ears with the blankets. That deadened the pandemonium somewhat and as the owls showed no tendency to abate their shrieks, an hour or two of resigned submission to the inevitable resulted in drowsiness, and finally in sleep. As Sybil said

next morning, no one would have believed that mortal girl could have slumbered under the affliction of such ear-splitting yells; but sleep they did, and when they wakened at daybreak profound silence reigned.

CHAPTER IX

MISS COLUMBUS AND MISS CRUSOE

Sybil cooked more fish for their breakfast, although Orissa objected to the extravagant waste of alcohol. But her chum argued that they must waste either the alcohol or the fish and as they had a strenuous day before them a substantial breakfast was eminently desirable.

They now packed the aluminum chest and made arrangements for the voyage, for the sea in the bay was smooth as glass and the ocean seemed nearly as quiet outside. Orissa had straightened and repaired the elevator rods and firmly bolted the chest in its original position, but the control must be a matter of future tinkering, the rod needed for its repair being at present stuck in the side of the bluff.

It was easy to roll the machine down the beach into the water and set it afloat, but the difficult matter was to propel their queer, top-heavy craft through the water. A quiet sea meant no wind, nor could they feel the slightest breath of air stirring. Oars they had none, nor any substitute for

such things; nor could they find anything to pole the boat along with.

"There's just one thing to be done," announced Orissa, gravely, "and that is for us to take turns wading behind the thing and pushing it along. By keeping close to the shore we ought to be able to accomplish our journey in that way."

"Suppose we strike deep water?" suggested Sybil.

"We'll stay close to shore. There seems to be a beach all the way."

"I'm game to try," declared Sybil, in a brisk tone, "but it seems at first sight like an impossible task. I'm glad, Miss Columbus, that under these circumstances your island is uninhabited—except by owls who can't see in the daytime."

"Were there other inhabitants," returned Orissa, "we would not be undertaking such a thing. The natives would either eat us or assist us."

"True for you, Cap'n. I'm going to keep my stockings on. They'll be some protection against those sharp rocks which we're liable to tread on."

"I shall do the same," said Orissa. "Take your seat in the boat, Syb, and I'll do the first stunt shoving. After we get around the point I will give you a chance to wade."

"Unanimously carried," said Sybil.

This undertaking did not appear nearly so preposterous to the two castaways as it may to the reader sitting quietly at home. Except that circumstances had made Orissa and Sybil aëronauts at a time when few girls have undertaken to fly through the air—as many will do in the future—they were quite like ordinary girls in all respects. A capricious fate had driven them into a far-away, unknown sea and cast them upon an uninviting island, but in such unusual circumstances they did what any girls would do, if they're the right sort; kept their courage and exercised every resource to make the most of their discouraging surroundings and keep alive until succor arrived.

So far, these two castaways had shown admirable stamina. Had either one been placed in such a position alone, the chances are she might have despaired and succumbed to girlish terrors, but being together their native pride forbade their admitting or even showing a trace of fear. In this manner they encouraged and supported one another, outwardly calm, whatever their inward tremors might be.

Orissa Kane was habitually dainty and feminine in both appearance and deportment, yet possessed a temperament cool and self-reliant. Her

natural cleverness and quickness of comprehension had been fostered by constant association with her mechanical, inventive brother, and it seemed to her quite proper to help herself when no one was by to render her aid. To wade in the warm, limpid water of the Pacific, at a place far removed from the haunts of humanity, in order to propel the precious craft on which her life and that of her companion might depend, to a better location, seemed to this girl quite the natural thing to do. Sybil's acute sense of humor led her to recognize the laughable side of this queer undertaking; yet even Sybil, much more frail and dependent than her beloved chum, had no thought of refusing her assistance.

The aluminum boat rode lightly upon the surface of the sea, the broad, overhanging planes scarcely interfering with its balance. Indeed, the planes probably assisted in keeping the boat upright. Orissa, knee-deep in the water, was not called upon to exert herself more than to wade; but this was a slow and tedious process and required frequent rests. At such times she would sit in the back of the boat and let her feet dangle in the warm water.

Gradually the Hy was propelled around the point of rock into the open sea, and by keeping

close to shore the girl seldom found herself out of her depth, and then only temporarily.

Sybil kept up a constant chatter, inducing Orissa frequently to laugh with her, and that made the task seem more an amusement than hard labor. They took turns at the wading, as had been agreed upon, but because Orissa was much the stronger her periods of playing mermaid were longer than those of her chum.

In this manner they made good progress, and though Sybil made a great deal of fun of what she called her "patent propeller," she took her turn at wading very seriously and pushed the strange craft through the water at a good rate of speed. By midday they reached the point where the bluff began to rise and here they sat together in the boat, shaded by the planes, and ate their luncheon with hearty appetites. They found it high tide, yet the water was more quiet than on the preceding day, and when they resumed their journey their progress was much more rapid than before.

By two o'clock they had cautiously propelled the boat around the huge boulder that marked the ravine they had found and soon after had rolled it upon the sandy beach and anchored it securely beyond the reach of the tide.

"If it would fly," said Orissa, "I think we

could push it to the top of the bluff; but if we use it at all, before our friends arrive, it must be as a boat, and not an aëroplane."

"Then," returned Sybil, "let's remove the canvas from the lower plane and make a tent of it."

"I've been thinking of that," said Orissa, "and I'm sure it is a wise thing to do. I know how to take the clips off, and it won't injure the cloth in the least."

"Then get busy, and I'll help you."

So, after a good rest on the beach in the sun they resumed their clothing. The wet stockings were thoroughly dried by the sun by the time they were ready for them, and presently they set to work removing the cloth from the lower plane. The task was almost completed when Sybil suddenly exclaimed:

"How about a frame for our tent?"

Orissa looked puzzled.

"Come up on the bluff," she proposed.

The incline was not at all difficult and they soon stood on top the bluff. A thorough examination of the place disclosed no means of erecting the tent. A few dead branches that had fallen from the banana trees lay scattered about and there was a quantity of anæmic shrubbery growing here and there, but there was nothing to fur-

nish poles for the tent or to support it in any way.

"Stumped, Columbus!" laughed Sybil, as they squatted together in the shade of the trees. "We shall have to drag up the aëroplane, after all, and use the plane-frame for our ridge-pole."

Orissa demurred at this.

"There is always a way to do a thing, if one can think how," she said.

"In this case, chummie dear, magic or legerdemain seems the only modus operandi," maintained Sybil. But Orissa was thinking, and as she thought she glanced at the trees.

"Why, of course!" she exclaimed.

Sybil's eyes questioned her gravely.

"Come on!" cried Orissa, jumping up.

"Not a step, Miss Columbus, until I'm enlightened."

"Oh, Crusoe, can't you see? It is so extremely simple that I'm ashamed of our stupidity. We've but to stretch our coil of wire between these two trees, throw the canvas over it and weight the bottom with rocks to hold it in place."

Sybil sighed.

"It was *too* easy," she admitted. "I never *could* guess an easy conundrum; but give me a hard nut to crack and I'm a regular squirrel."

They returned to the beach for the canvas and

wire and Orissa took several of the clips, with which to fasten together the ends of their tent. Ascending once more, this time heavily loaded, to the group of bananas on the bluff, they proceeded to attach the wire to two of the trees. The plane-cover was large enough to afford a broad spread to their "A" tent and when the lower edges were secured by means of heavy stones, and the scattered rocks cleared away from the interior, their new domicile seemed roomy and inviting.

Their next task was to fetch the aluminum chest from the beach, and after they had lightened its weight by leaving in the boat all the tools except the hatchet and a small hack saw, they were able to carry the chest between them, although forced to make frequent stops to rest.

"The lack of a bedstead worries me most," remarked Sybil. "I don't like the idea of sleeping on the bare ground. How would it do, Ris, to build a stone bed—something like an altar, you know, with a hollow center which we could fill with sand?"

"That is a capital idea, Crusoe, and will help clear our front yard of some of those flat stones. They are mostly slate, I think, instead of rock formation. Heave-ho, my hearty, and we'll do the job in a jiffy."

The girls lugged into the tent a number of stones of such size as they could comfortably move, and then Orissa, who could put her hand to almost any sort of work, planned and built the extraordinary bedstead. It was laid solid, at first, but when about a foot from the ground she began to extend the sides of the pile and leave a hollow in the middle. This hollow they afterward filled with sand, carrying it in their dress-skirts from the beach. When finally the "Altar to Morpheus"—as Sybil persisted in calling it—was completed, they spread their blankets upon it and it made a very comfortable place to sleep.

They also erected a small rock stove, for there was enough firewood to be gathered, in the way of fallen branches, dead leaves and "peelings" from the tree-trunks, to last them for several days. The hatchet and hack saw helped prepare these scraps to fit the stove and by sundown the girls felt quite settled in their new residence.

"We ought to fly a flag of distress from some place high up on those trees," observed Orissa; "but we've no flag and no way to shin up the tree."

"Couldn't any ship see our white tent from the ocean?" asked Sybil.

"Yes; I think so."

"As for climbing the tree," continued Sybil,

"I wish your creative brain would evolve some way to do it. Those fat, yellow bananas look mighty tempting and they would serve to eke out our larder. Supplies are beginning to diminish with alarming rapidity, Ris. Only a box and a half of those biscuits left."

"I know," said Orissa, soberly. "To-morrow we will see what may be done to capture the bananas."

After a time Sybil said, softly: "By to-morrow we may begin to look for Daddy and Steve. Of course it will take them some time to find us, but—— Don't you think, Orissa, they're quite certain to find us, in the end?"

Orissa looked at her companion with a gleam of pity in her deep blue eyes; but she had no desire to disturb Sybil's confidence in their rescue, whatever misgivings oppressed her own heart.

"I believe they will find us," she affirmed. "It may not be to-morrow, you know, nor in a week, nor—perhaps—in a month——"

"Oh, Orissa!"

"But they'll cover the entire Pacific in their search, I am positive, and sooner or later they'll come to this island and—take us away."

"Alive or dead," added Sybil, gloomily.

"Oh, as for that, we are perfectly safe, and

healthy—so far—and I imagine we could live for a long time on this island, if obliged to."

Again they sat silently thinking, while twilight gave way to darkness and darkness was relieved by the pale moonlight.

Suddenly a shriek sounded in their ears. A great white bird swooped down from the mountain and passed directly between their two heads, disappearing into the night with another appalling cry. This shriek was answered by another and another, until the whole island resounded with the distracting "Ku-whoo-oo!"

"The owls are awake," said Orissa, rising resignedly. "Come into the tent, Sybil. I'm not sure they wouldn't attack us if we remained in the open."

CHAPTER X

MADELINE DENTRY'S PROPOSITION

At the aviation field the crowd had watched the departure of the two girls, flying the famous Kane Hydro-Aircraft, with eager interest but assured confidence in their making a successful trip. The Flying Girl never indulged in accidents, and her skill was universally admitted. To be sure, there was an added risk in flying over the water, but with a motor boat to sustain them when they alighted, the danger was reduced to a minimum and, in the minds of nearly all the spectators, a triumphant return was unquestioned. Hundreds of glasses followed the flight and although the management sent several bird-men into the air to amuse the throng the real interest remained centered on the dim speck that marked the course of the Flying Girl.

No sooner had Orissa and Sybil started on their voyage than Stephen Kane and Mr. Cumberford ran to the bluff overlooking the sea, where with powerful binoculars they could obtain an unobstructed view of the entire trip to the

island and back again. Presently Madeline Dentry joined them, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Tupper, all standing silently with leveled glasses.

"She's working beautifully," muttered Steve, referring to his invention with boyish delight. "I'm sorry Ris didn't make a straight line of it, but she always likes to give the dear public the worth of their money. . . . Ah-h!"

"By Jove! that was an awkward turn," cried Mr. Cumberford, as they saw the Aircraft keel at a dangerous angle and then slowly right itself. "I'm surprised at Orissa. She usually makes her turns so neatly."

"I've an idea that blamed steering gear stuck," said Steve, ruefully. "I've been a little afraid of it, all along. But the girls are all right now. They're headed dead for the island and if Orissa makes a neat drop to the water the rest is easy."

No one spoke again for a time, all being intent upon the flying-machine. When it had seemed to reach the island, and even to pass over it, without a halt, there was an excited hum of amazement from the grand stand.

Madeline glanced at Stephen Kane's face and found it as white as a sheet. He was staring with dilated eyes toward the Aircraft.

"What in the mischief is Orissa up to now?"

questioned Mr. Cumberford, uneasily. "Wasn't she to alight this side of the island?"

"Yes," answered Steve hoarsely.

"Then—— She can't be joking, or playing pranks. It isn't like her. Why, they haven't swerved a hair's breadth from the course, or even slackened speed. They—they——"

"They're in trouble, I'm afraid," said Steve in trembling tones. "The control has failed them and they can't stop."

"Can't stop!" The little line of observers on the bluff echoed the thrilling words. From the grand stand came a roar of voices filled with tense excitement. Some thought the Flying Girl was attempting a reckless performance, with the idea of shocking the crowd; but Stephen Kane knew better, and so did Mr. Cumberford. As the two men held their glasses to their eyes with shaking hands, straining to discover a sign that Orissa had altered her course and was coming back, Madeline Dentry turned to look earnestly at the brother and father of the girls, knowing she could read the facts more truly from their faces than by focusing her own glasses on that tiny speck in the sky.

The moments dragged slowly, yet laden with tragic import. The powerful lenses lost the speck, now found it again—lost it for good—yet the men

most affected by this strange occurrence still glared at the sky, hoping against hope that their fears were unfounded and that the Aircraft would come back.

Some one plucked Steve's sleeve. It was Chesty Todd, his big body shaken like an aspen.

"It—it has run away with 'em, Steve. It's gone wrong, man; there's danger ahead!"

"Eh?" said Steve, dully.

"Wake up and do something!"

Steve lowered his glasses and looked helplessly at Mr. Cumberford. Cumberford returned the stare, glowering upon the inventor.

"That's right; it's up to you, Kane. What are you going to do?" he asked coldly.

"There's no other hydro-aëroplane on the grounds," said the boy brokenly.

"Then get an aëroplane," commanded Cumberford, sharply.

"It would mean death to anyone who ventured to follow our girls in an aëroplane—not rescue for them."

Cumberford moaned, as if in pain; then stamped his foot impatiently, as if ashamed of his weakness.

"Well—well! What then, Stephen Kane?" he demanded.

"It—it has run away with 'em Steve. It 's gone wrong, man; there's danger ahead!"

Steve wrung his hands, realizing his helplessness.

"Gentlemen," said Madeline Dentry, laying a gentle hand on Mr. Cumberford's arm, "let me help you. There is no reason for despair just yet; the condition of those girls is far from desperate, it seems to me. Did I understand you to say, Mr. Kane, that your sister is unable to stop the engine, or to turn the machine?"

Steve nodded.

"That's it," he said. "Something has broken. I can't imagine what it is, but there's no other way to explain the thing."

"Very well," rejoined Madeline, coolly, "let us, then, try to consider intelligently what will happen to them. Will they presently descend and alight upon the surface of the water?"

"I'm—I'm afraid not," Steve answered. "If that were possible, Orissa would have done it long ago. I think something has happened to affect the control, and therefore my sister is helpless."

"In that case, how long will they continue flying?" persisted Madeline.

"As long as the gasoline lasts—three or four hours."

"And how fast are they traveling, Mr. Kane?"

"I think at the rate of about forty-five miles an hour."

Miss Dentry made a mental calculation.

"Then they will descend about a hundred and fifty miles from here, in a straight line over that island," said she. "Having a boat under them, I suppose they will float indefinitely?"

Again Steve nodded, looking at the girl curiously and wondering at her logic.

"If—if they manage to alight upon the water in good shape," he replied more hopefully, "they'll be safe enough—for a time. And they have food and water with them. The only danger I fear for them, at present, is that when the gasoline is exhausted the machine will be wrecked."

"Don't you aviators often shut off your engine and volplane to the ground?" asked Madeline.

"Yes, with the elevator and rudder in full control. But that isn't the case with Orissa. I'm certain her elevator control has bound in some way. Were it broken, and free, the Aircraft would have wobbled, and perhaps tumbled while we were looking at it. The elevator is wedged, you see, and my sister can't move it at all. So, when the gasoline gives out, I—I'm not sure how the machine will act."

"Anyway," exclaimed Madeline, with sudden determination, "we are wasting valuable time in useless talk. Follow me at once."

"Where to?" asked Steve, in surprise.

"To my yacht. I'm going after the girls. Please come with us, Mr. Cumberford—and you, too, Mr. Todd. Aunty," turning to Mrs. Tupper, "if you require anything from the hotel for the journey I will send you there in the car; but you must hurry, for every moment is precious."

Mr. Cumberford straightened up, animated and alert, while his face brightened with a ray of hope.

"We will take my car to the bay," said he, eagerly, "and Mr. and Mrs. Tupper can use your own car to visit the hotel. Will you accompany us, or ride with your aunt?"

"With you," decided Madeline. "I must have the captain get up steam and prepare to sail. It won't take long; I've ordered them to keep a little steam all the time, in case I wish to take a party out for a ride."

Even as they were speaking all walked rapidly toward the long line of motor cars. Mrs. Tupper, who had not ventured a remark or made any protest—quite contrary to her usual custom—now astonished her niece by saying:

"Never mind the hotel; let us all go directly to the yacht. With those two poor girls in danger I couldn't bear to think I had caused a moment's delay. It is very comfortable on the yacht and—we'll get along all right for a day."

"To be sure; to be sure," agreed Mr. Tupper, nervously. "I shall be seasick; I'm bound to be seasick; I always am; but in this emergency my place is by Madeline's side."

Of course no protest would have affected Madeline's determination, and the worthy couple recognized that fact perfectly; hence they diplomatically abetted her plan.

Captain Krell had attended the exhibitions at the aviation field, but while there he kept one eye on Miss Dentry. During the panic caused by the runaway aëroplane he saw Miss Dentry in earnest conversation with Cumberford and Kane and marked their hurried departure from the field. So the gallant captain scuttled back to the yacht at his best speed, to find Miss Dentry already aboard and the engineer shoveling in coal.

Both Mr. Cumberford and Steve knew that the *Salvador* was by odds the fastest ship in the bay, and Madeline's prompt offer to go to the rescue of their imperilled daughter and sister awakened hope in their breasts and aroused their lively gratitude.

After all it did not take the yacht long to get under way. It was so perfectly manned and in such complete readiness that steam was the only requisite to begin a trip instantly. Madeline could scarcely wait while with aggravating deliberation

they hoisted anchor, but she became more composed as the yacht slowly headed out of the bay, the crew alert and the big captain as eager as any of them to rescue the daring bird-maids.

By the time the *Salvador* reached the open sea the shore was lined with thousands of spectators, and the sight of the graceful yacht headed in chase of the two girls raised a cheer so lusty and heartfelt that it reached Madeline's ears and caused her to flush with pleasure and renewed determination.

CHAPTER XI

A GAME OF CHECKERS

"Nine o'clock!" cried Orissa, giving Sybil a nudge. "Are you going to sleep all day, Crusoe, like those dreadful owls?"

"I'd like to," muttered Miss Cumberford, regretfully opening her eyes. "My, what a blessed relief from that night of torture! Don't you think, Ris, that those feathered fiends only stopped the concert because they'd howled until their throats were sore?"

"I fear we made a mistake in changing our camp," returned Orissa, busy with her toilet. "The shrieks sounded much louder than they did the night before."

"Question is," said Sybil, rolling off the improvised bed, "how long we are to endure this imprisonment. If it's to be a mere day or so, don't let's move again. However, if you think we're here for life, I propose we murder every owl and have done with them."

"We can't read the future, of course," remarked Orissa thoughtfully, as she stroked her

beautiful hair with her back-comb—the only toilet article she possessed. "Steve may get to us any day, or he may have a hard time finding us. He will never give up, though, nor will your father, until our retreat is located and—and—our fate determined."

"Poor Daddy!" sighed Sybil; "he'll be worried to death. I've led him a dog's life, I know; but he's just as fond and faithful as if I'd been a dutiful daughter."

"I hope they won't tell mother," said Orissa. "The anxiety would be so hard for her to bear. *We* know we're fairly comfortable, Syb; but they can't know that, nor have any clear idea what's become of us."

They fell quiet, after this, and exchanged few words until they were outside the tent and had made a fire of twigs and leaves in the rock stove. Sybil warmed the last of the baked beans, adding a little water to moisten them. With these they each ate a biscuit and finished their breakfast with a draught of cool water from the spring.

After the meal they wandered among the queer greenery they had before observed and Sybil called attention to the fact that many of the broad, tender leaves had been nibbled at the edges.

"The owls did that, of course," said Orissa,

"and if it is good food for owls I'm sure it wouldn't hurt us."

"Doesn't it look something like lettuce?" asked Sybil.

"Yes; perhaps that is what it is—wild lettuce."

She plucked a leaf and tasted it. The flavor was agreeable and not unlike that of lettuce.

"Well," said Sybil, after tasting the green, "here's an item to add to our bill-of-fare. If only we had dressing for it a salad would be mighty appetizing."

"There's the vinegar in the bottle of pickles," proposed Orissa. "It won't go very far, but it will help. Let us try the new dish for luncheon."

"And how about the bananas?" asked Miss Cumberford.

"I'll proceed to get them right now," promised Orissa, walking back to the group of trees.

The bare, smooth trunks extended twenty feet in the air before a branch appeared. The branches were broad, stout leaves, among which hung the bunches of fruit.

"I hate to ruin a perfectly good tree," declared Orissa, picking up the hatchet, "but self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"Goodness me! You're not thinking of chopping it down, I hope," exclaimed Sybil.

"No; that would be too great a task to undertake. I've a better way, I think."

She selected a tree that had three large bunches of bananas on it. One bunch was quite ripe, the next just showing color and the third yet an emerald green. Each bunch consisted of from sixty to eighty bananas.

First Orissa chopped notches on either side of the trunk, at such distances as would afford support for her feet. When these notches rose as high as she could reach, she brought two broad straps from the Aircraft, buckled them together around the tree-trunk, and then passed the slack around her body and beneath her arms. Thus supported she began the ascent, placing her feet in the notches she had already cut and chopping more notches as she advanced.

In this manner the girl reached the lower branches and after climbing into them removed the strap and crept along until she reached the first bunch of bananas.

"Stand from under!" she cried to Sybil and began chopping at the stem. Presently the huge bunch fell with a thud and Sybil gleefully applauded by clapping her hands.

"The lower ones are a bit mushy, I fear," she called to her chum, "but that can't be helped."

"We will eat those first," said Orissa, creeping to the second bunch.

She managed to cut it loose, and the third, after which she replaced the strap around her body and cautiously descended to the ground. The two girls then rolled over the ripest bunch and found the damage confined to a couple of dozen bananas, the skins of which had burst from the force of the heavy fall. A moment later they were feasting on the fruit, which they found delicious.

"I've read somewhere," said Sybil, "that bananas alone will sustain life for an indefinite period. They are filling and satisfying, and they're wholesome. We needn't worry any longer for fear of starvation, Ris."

"I imagine we'd get deadly tired of the things, in time," replied Orissa; "but, as you say, they'll sustain life, and just at present they taste mighty good."

They drew the ripest bunch into the tent, but left the others lying in the bright sunshine.

"Now," announced Orissa, "we must make an expedition to that crevasse and rescue the bar and the lever, which we left sticking in the rocks. The tide is low, so we may go around by way of the shore."

A leisurely walk of fifteen minutes brought them to the crevasse, down which tumbled the tiny

brook. Orissa, as the most venturesome, climbed to the bar, from whence she managed to pull the lever out of the owl's nest into which she had formerly thrust it. If the owl was hidden there now it failed to disclose its presence and on descending to the rocks Orissa easily released the bar. So now, armed once more with their primitive weapons, the girls returned to their camp.

"I can attach these to our machine at any time," said the air-maid, "so I think it may be best to keep them beside us, to use in case of emergency. I haven't felt entirely safe since we lost them."

"Nor I," returned Sybil. "We haven't encountered anything dangerous, so far, but I like to feel I've something to pound with, should occasion arise."

That afternoon Orissa worked on the Aircraft, repairing the damage caused by the sliding chest. She also took apart the steering gear, filed the bearings carefully, and afterward replaced the parts, fitting them nicely together and greasing them thoroughly. As a result of this labor the gear now worked easily and its parts were not likely again to bind.

"Steve made it altogether too light for its purpose," said the girl. "On the next machine I must see that he remedies that fault."

Sybil had been lying half asleep on the sands, shaded by the spreading plane of the Aircraft. She now aroused herself and looked at her companion with a whimsical expression while the other girl carefully gathered up the tools and put them away.

"All ready to run, Ris?" she asked.

"All ready."

"I suppose with the gasoline tanks filled we could go home?"

"Yes; I think so. With the wind in our favor, as it was when we came, we ought to cover the same distance easily."

"Very good. I hope you are now satisfied, having worked like a nailer for half a day, getting a machine in order that can't be utilized. Gasoline doesn't grow on this island, I imagine—unless it could be made from bananas."

"No; it doesn't grow here."

"And none of the department stores keep it."

"True."

"But we've got a flying-machine, in apple-pie order, except that we're using one of the plane coverings for a tent and a lever for a weapon of defense."

"Absolutely correct, Crusoe."

"Hooray. Let's go to sleep again, dear. Those

screechers will keep us awake all night, you know."

She closed her eyes drowsily and Orissa sat beside her and looked thoughtfully over the expanse of blue ocean. There was nothing in sight; nothing save the big island at the west, which seemed from this distance to be much more desirable than the bleak rocks on which the adventurers had stranded.

Orissa got her binoculars and made a careful inspection of the place. Through the powerful glasses she could discover forests, green meadowland and the gleam of a small river. It was a flat island, yet somewhat elevated above the surface of the sea. She judged it to be at least four times bigger than the island they were now on. The distance rendered it impossible to discover whether the place was inhabited or not. No houses showed themselves, but of course she could see only one side of the island from where she sat.

Orissa did not feel sleepy, in spite of her wakeful night, so she took Sybil's fishline and baited the hook with a scrap of beef. Going to the top of the bluff she began to fish, and as she fished she reviewed in mind all the conditions of their misfortune and strove to find a way of relief. Being unsuccessful in both occupations she finally came back to the little bay and waded out to the

big rock that guarded the mouth of the inlet. On the ocean side there was good depth of water and in the course of the next half hour she landed a huge crawfish, two crabs and a two-pound flat fish resembling a sole. This last is known as "chicken-halibut" and is delicious eating.

She aroused Sybil, and the two girls built a fire, using dry twigs from the brushwood, a supply of which they had gathered and placed near their tent. In the fat taken from the crawfish they fried the halibut for supper. Then among the coals and hot stones they buried the crabs, keeping a little fire above them until they were sure the creatures were thoroughly roasted. Next day they cracked the shells and picked out the meat, deciding they might live luxuriously even on an island of rocks, provided they exercised their wits and took advantage of all conditions Nature afforded them.

At dark thousands of great owls came from their retreats among the rocks and flew ceaselessly about the island, uttering their distracting cries. Nor was there a moment's peace again until daybreak. The birds were evidently in search of food, and found it; but what it consisted of the girls could not imagine. Singularly enough, the castaways were growing accustomed to the deafening clamor and as they felt quite

safe within their enclosed tent they were able to sleep—in a fitful, restless way—a good part of the night.

The following day they began to find the hours dragging tediously, for the first time since their captivity. Arm in arm the two girls wandered around the elevated end of their island, exploring it thoroughly but making no new discoveries of importance. The barren, slimy hollow that lay inland had no temptations to lure them near it and so there remained little else to do but watch the ocean and prepare their meals.

"This is our fourth day of isolation," announced Sybil, in a tone more irritable than she was wont to use. "I wonder how long this thing will last."

"We must be patient," said Orissa, gently. "Our dear ones are making every effort to find us, I'm sure, and of course they will succeed in time. We are at some distance from the usual route of ships; that is evident; and for this reason it will be more difficult for our friends to locate us. I suppose that a few days more may easily pass by before we catch sight of a boat coming to get us. But they'll come, Syb," she repeated, confidently, "and meantime we—we must be—patient."

Sybil stared across the water.

"Do you play checkers?" she asked abruptly.

"Steve and I used to play, long ago. I suppose I could remember the game, and it might amuse us; but we have no checkerboard, nor men for it."

"Pah! and you the sister of an inventor!" cried Sybil scornfully. "I'm astonished at you, Miss Kane. Haven't you enough reflected ingenuity to manufacture a checkerboard?"

"Why, I think so," said Orissa. "The idea hadn't occurred to me. I'll see what I can do."

"You make the board, and I'll find the men," proposed Sybil, and springing to her feet she ran down to the beach, glad to have anything to occupy her and relieve the dreary dragging of the hours.

Orissa looked around her, pondering the problem. Material for a checkerboard seemed hopelessly lacking, yet after a little thought she solved the problem fairly well. First she ripped the flounce from her black silk petticoat and with the jackknife from the tool kit she cut out thirty-two black squares, each two inches in diameter. Then she took a tube of prepared glue that was in the outfit and walked up the incline to their tent, in the center of which stood the aluminum chest. This chest, being of a dull silvery color, and quite smooth on all its sides, was to be the groundwork

of the checkerboard squares, as well as the board itself and the elevated table to play on. Orissa glued the squares of black silk to the cover of the chest, leaving a similar square space on the aluminum surface between each one. When this was accomplished she pasted a narrow edge of black around the entire sixty-four squares, thus marking their boundary.

She was very proud of this work and was regarding it admiringly when Sybil entered.

"How clever!" cried her chum, genuinely enthusiastic. "Really, Miss Columbus, you have done better than I. But here are the checker-men, and they'll do very nicely."

As she spoke she dumped from her handkerchief upon the board twenty-four shells which she had carefully selected from those that littered the beach. Twelve were dark in color and twelve pearly white and being of uniform size they made very practical checkers.

"Now, then," said she, squatting beside the chest and arranging her shells in order, "I'll play you a series of games for a box of bonbons, to be purchased when we return to civilization."

"How many games?" asked Orissa, seating herself opposite.

"Let us say—the best three in five. If that's too rapid we will make the next bet the best six

in ten, or twelve in twenty. Agreeable, Columbus?"

"Entirely so, Crusoe."

It was really a capital diversion. Sybil played very well and it required all Orissa's cleverness to oppose her. At times they tired of the play and went for a stroll on the bluff; and always, no matter how intent they were upon the game, they kept watchful eyes on the ocean.

And in this manner the days dragged on their weary lengths and the nights resounded to the shrill cries of the owls. One morning Sybil asked:

"Isn't to-day Tuesday, Orissa?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "We've inhabited this wilderness just a week."

CHAPTER XII

THE QUEST OF THE SALVADOR

On the roomy forward deck of the *Salvador* an earnest conference was held.

"How fast are we going?" asked Steve.

"The captain says about fifteen miles an hour. That's our best clip, it seems," replied Madeline.

"And very good speed," added Captain Krell, proudly.

"So it is, for an English yacht," agreed Mr. Cumberford.

"In that case," said Steve, "we are moving one-third as fast as the Aircraft did, and we were about two hours later in starting. Provided the girls exhaust their gasoline in flying, they will make a hundred and fifty to two hundred miles, requiring five or six hours' time. Then they will alight, bobbing upon the water and helpless to move in any direction except where the current carries them. It will take us eighteen hours to reach that same spot, and we will therefore be twelve hours behind them. Do you all follow me?"

They nodded, listening intently.

"Now, the girls left at about one thirty this afternoon. If my calculations are correct, they'll take to the water anywhere from six thirty to seven thirty this evening. We shall overtake them at about the same hour to-morrow morning. Unless they drift considerably out of their course we shall see the white planes at daybreak and have no trouble in running alongside. But there's always the chance that through some cause they may manage to drop to water sooner, and perhaps run the boat toward home. Orissa is a very clever girl, as you all know; calm and resourceful; quick-witted and brave. She will do all that anyone could do to bring the Aircraft under control. So the one danger, it appears to me, is that we may pass them during the night."

"That danger, sir," said Captain Krell, "may be reduced to a minimum. We carry a very powerful searchlight, which shall be worked by my men all night, illuminating not only the course ahead, but the sea for miles on every side. As you say, Mr. Kane, the white planes may be easily seen against the blue water, and we positively cannot miss them during the night."

"You—er—interest me," said Mr. Cumberford, looking more cheerful. "We seem to have every-

thing in our favor, thanks to Miss Dentry's generosity."

"I'm *so* glad I bought this yacht!" exclaimed Madeline, fervently, "for it enabled me to go to the assistance of those poor girls. I'm sure it was all providential."

"Let us hope," said Mr. Tupper pompously, "the young women will survive until we reach them. However, we shall learn their fate, in any event, which will afford us a certain degree of satisfaction."

That speech was like a douche of cold water, but although the gentleman received various indignant and reproachful looks he had "sized up the situation" with fair accuracy.

Mr. Cumberford, however, since those first despairing moments on the aviation field, had recovered command of his feelings and seemed hopeful, if not confident, of his daughter's ultimate escape from serious mishap. He was exceedingly fond of Orissa, too, and even had not Sybil been with her it is certain that he would have been much worried and eager to go to her assistance.

Stephen Kane, on the contrary, grew more nervous as time passed. Better than the others he knew the dangers that threatened the girls if, as he suspected, the steering gear had broken and the elevator and engine control been rendered

useless. He racked his brain to think what could have caused the trouble, but never a hint of the truth dawned upon him.

The third member of the Kane-Cumberford party, Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, had maintained a discreet silence ever since Miss Dentry had invited him to join the rescue party. This she had been led to do by the look of abject misery on the boy's face, and he had merely pressed her hand to indicate his thanks. Chesty Todd was never much of a conversationalist and his appreciation of his own awkwardness rendered him diffident unless occasion demanded prompt and aggressive action, when he usually came to the front in an efficient if unexpected manner.

Madeline Dentry, seeing Chesty Todd merely as he appeared, wondered in a casual way why such a blundering, incompetent booby had been employed by the Kane-Cumberford firm, but as the big boy was a part of the "camp" and was so evidently disturbed by the accident, she was glad to relieve him to the extent of adding him to the party.

Very soon after the *Salvador* started, however, nearly every one on board began to feel the presence of the youthful press agent. It was Chesty Todd who discovered the searchlight aboard and long before the conference on the deck he had

primed the captain to use it during the coming night. It was Chesty Todd who sat on a coal-bunker in the hold, swinging his long legs and inspiring the engineer, by dark insinuations concerning the *Salvador's* ability to speed, to give her engines every pound of steam she could carry. It was Chesty who pumped the steward to learn how well the boat was provisioned and supplied the deck hands with choice cigars until they were ready to swear he was a trump and imagined him quite the most important personage aboard, after Miss Dentry.

The chef served an excellent dinner in the cabin, to which no one did full justice except Mr. Tupper. All were loth to leave the deck long enough to eat, although they knew a watch was stationed in the "crow's nest" with powerful glasses. When night fell the searchlight came into play and the entire party sat huddled forward, eagerly following the sweep of light across the waters. It was ten o'clock when Mr. and Mrs. Tupper retired, and midnight when Madeline went to her room, leaving orders to call her if the Aircraft was sighted.

Stephen Kane, Mr. Cumberford and Chesty Todd sat by the rail all night, wide-eyed and alert. Once the searchlight caught the sails of a ship and they all leaped up, thinking it was the Air-

craft. Again, something dark—a tangled mass of wreckage—swept by them and set their hearts throbbing until they held the light steadily upon it and discovered it to be a jumble of kelp and driftwood. Daylight came and found them wan but still wakeful, for now they were getting close to the limit of flight possible to the Aircraft.

Captain Krell was a skillful navigator and, having taken his course in a direct line from Sealskin Island, following the flight of Orissa's Hydro-Aircraft, had not swerved a hair's breadth from it the entire voyage.

"You see," said Steve, peering ahead in the strengthening daylight, "the *Salvador* hasn't dodged a bit, and the Aircraft couldn't. So we're bound to strike our quarry soon."

"Wind," suggested Chesty.

"Yes; the wind might carry them a little out of their course, to be sure," admitted Steve; "but I think—I hope—not far enough to escape our range of vision."

At about seven o'clock, at Chesty Todd's suggestion, the engines were slowed down somewhat, that the lookout aloft might have better opportunity to examine the sea on all sides of the ship. The yacht still maintained fair speed, however, and the call to breakfast finding no one willing to respond, Madeline ordered coffee and rolls served

on deck, where they could all watch while refreshing themselves.

"What's your run, Captain?" asked Steve, nervously.

"Hundred and forty miles, sir."

"Indeed! Go a little slower, please."

The captain rang the bell to slow down. Presently the *Salvador* was creeping along at the rate of ten miles an hour.

"The gasoline," said Steve, "may have carried them farther than I figured on. It's a new machine and I haven't had a chance to test the exact capacity of the tanks."

The moments dragged tediously. Every person aboard was laboring under tense excitement.

"What's the run, Captain?"

"One fifty-two, sir."

"Ah."

Nothing was in sight; only an uninterrupted stretch of blue sea. Hour after hour passed. At noon the run was two hundred and twenty miles and the aëroplane had not been sighted. Steve turned and faced those assembled.

"It's no use going farther in this direction," he said, the words trembling on his lips. "I'm very sure they couldn't have made this distance."

"Evidently their course has been altered by the wind," added Mr. Cumberford.

"Gusty, at times, last night," asserted Chesty.

Steve nodded.

"A strong wind might do what the girls couldn't," said he. "That is, it might alter the direction of their flight. How did it blow?"

"At four o'clock, from the north; at five fifteen, from the west; at six, due south," said Chesty.

There was silence for a few minutes. The engines had been shut down and the boat lay drifting upon the water.

"I think it will be well to examine the charts," suggested Mr. Todd, "and find out where we are."

"I know where we are," said Captain Krell. "Wait a moment; I'll get the chart, so you may all study it."

He brought it from his cabin and spread it upon a folding table on the deck. A penciled line ran directly from the port of San Diego to a point south by southwest.

"A few more hours on the same course and we'd sight the little island of Guadaloup, off the Mexican coast," explained Captain Krell. "But the aëroplane couldn't go so far; therefore we must search on either side the course we've come."

They all bent their heads over the map.

"What are those unmarked dots which are scattered around?" inquired Mr. Cumberford.

"Islands, sir. Mostly bits of rock jutting out

of the sea. They're not important enough to name, nor do they appear on an ordinary map; but a seaman's chart indicates them, for unless we had knowledge of their whereabouts we might bump into them."

"They're mostly to the south of us, I see," remarked Mr. Tupper.

"Yes, sir."

"And it's south we must go, I think," said Steve, looking at Chesty Todd for the youth to confirm his judgment. "There was no wind to take them to the west of this course, I believe."

"That's my idea," declared the press agent. "I would suggest our doubling back and forth, on the return trip, covering forty or fifty miles at each leg. Seems like we couldn't miss 'em, that way."

After much consultation this plan was finally agreed upon. The captain outlined his course and followed it, so that during the next four days not a square yard of ocean escaped their search. But it was all in vain and at the end of the fourth day, with the California coast again in sight, there was scarcely a person aboard who entertained the slightest hope of finding the missing girls.

CHAPTER XIII

CAPRICIOUS FATE

A wireless was sent to the shore, reporting the failure of the *Salvador* to locate the runaway aëroplane and asking if any tidings had been received of Orissa Kane and Sybil Cumberford.

There was no news.

Madeline called her passengers together again for a further consultation.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

Neither Steve nor Mr. Cumberford could well reply. Miss Dentry had generously placed her splendid yacht at their disposal and in person had conducted the search, neglecting no detail that might contribute to their success. But failure had resulted and they could not ask her to continue what appeared to be a hopeless undertaking. Steve, who had had ample time to consider this finale, tried to answer her question.

"We are very grateful to you, Miss Dentry," he said, "and both Mr. Cumberford and I fully appreciate the sacrifice you have made in so promptly trying to rescue our girls. That we face

failure is no fault of yours, nor of your crew, and I realize that you have already done all that humanity or friendship might require. Of course you understand that we cannot give up until my sister's fate, and that of Miss Cumberford, is positively determined. Therefore, as soon as we reach shore we shall organize another expedition to continue the quest."

"You are doing me an injustice, sir," returned the girl gravely. "Whatever my former plans may have been I am now determined not to abandon this voyage until we have found your sister and her companion. I was greatly attracted by Orissa Kane, and grieve over her sad fate sincerely. Moreover, I do not like to put my hand to the plow without completing the furrow. Unless you believe you can charter a better boat for your purpose than the *Salvador,* or can find a crew more devoted to your interests, I shall order Captain Krell to turn about and renew the search."

That, of course, settled the matter. The *Salvador* put about and returned to a point where the see-sawing must be renewed and extended to cover more expanse of ocean.

Chesty Todd, coming to where Madeline stood beside the rail, looked into her piquant face with frank admiration.

"Excuse me, Miss Dentry," said he, "but

you're what I'd call a brick. I knew, of course, you'd stick it out, but there's no harm in congratulating a girl on being true blue. I'm awfully glad you—you had the grit to tackle it again. I'll never be myself again until those girls are found."

She looked up at him reflectively.

"Which of the young ladies are you engaged to?" she asked.

"Me?" blushing like a schoolboy; "neither one, if you please. They—they're only kids, you know."

"Then which one do you love?"

"Both!" said Chesty Todd, earnestly. "They're splendid girls, Miss Dentry; *your* sort, you know."

She smiled.

"Then it's the 'sort' you love?" she asked.

"Yes, if you'll allow me. Not the individual—as yet. When I love the individual I hope it'll be the right sort, but I'm so bumbly unlucky I'll probably make a mistake."

For the first time since their acquaintance Madeline found the big boy interesting. She knew very little of the history of the Kanes and Cumberfords, but found Chesty eager to speak of them and of his past relations with them, being loud in his praise for the entire "combination."

Cumberford was an eccentric fellow, according to Mr. Radley-Todd, but "straight as a die." Steve was chock full of ability and talent, but not very practical in business ways. Mrs. Kane, Orissa's blind mother, was the sweetest and gentlest lady in the world, Sybil Cumberford a delightful mystery that defied fathoming but constantly allured one to the attempt, while Orissa——

"Orissa Kane is a girl you'll have to read yourself, Miss Dentry, and the more you study her the better you'll love her. She's girl all over, and the kind of girl one always hopes to meet but seldom does. Old-fashioned in her gentleness, simplicity, truth and candor; up-to-the-minute in the world's latest discovery—the art of flying. Modest as Tennyson's dairymaid; brave as a trooper; a maid with a true maid's heart and a thorough sport when you give her an aëroplane to manage. Excuse me. I don't often talk this way; usually I can only express myself in writing. But a fellow who wouldn't enthuse over Orissa Kane could only have one excuse—total dumbness."

"I see," said Madeline, slyly. "Miss Kane is the type of the 'sort' of girl you love."

"Exactly. But tell me, since you've started on such an indefinite cruise, is the *Salvador* well provisioned?"

"From the sublime to the ridiculous! We have

stores to last our party six weeks, without scrimping."

"Good. And coal?"

"Enough for a month's continuous run. I had intended a trip to Honolulu—perhaps as far as Japan—and had prepared for it even before I was privileged to lay eyes on my yacht."

"How fortunate that was, for all of us! Somehow, I've a feeling we shall find those girls, this time. Before, I had a sort of hunch we were destined to fail. Can you explain that?"

"I shall not try."

"We didn't allow enough for the wind. A sudden gust might have whirled the Aircraft in any direction, and it would jog along on that route until the next blow."

"Do you believe they are still alive?" she asked softly.

"Yes; I've never been able to think of them as —as—otherwise. They are wonderfully clever girls, and Orissa knows aëroplanes backwards and forwards. She's as much at home in the air as a bird; and why shouldn't the machine fall gently to the water, when the gasoline gave out? If it did, they can float any length of time, and the Pacific has been like a mill pond ever since they started. According to Mr. Cumberford, they have enough food with them to last for several

days. I've an idea we shall run across them bobbing up and down on the water, as happy and contented as two babes in the wood." The big fellow sighed as he said this, and Madeline understood he was trying to encourage himself, as well as her.

In spite of Chesty Todd's prediction, day followed day in weary search and the lost aëroplane was not sighted. Captain and crew had now abandoned hope and performed their duties in a perfunctory way. Stephen Kane had grown thin and pale and deep lines of grief marked his boyish face. Mr. Cumberford was silent and stern. He paced the deck constantly but avoided conversation with Steve. Madeline, however, kept up bravely, and so did Chesty Todd. They were much together, these trying days, and did much to cheer one another's spirits. Had a vote been taken, on that tenth dreary day, none but these two would have declared in favor of prolonging what now appeared to be a hopeless quest.

"You see," said Chesty to Madeline, yet loud enough to be heard by both Cumberford and Steve, "there's every chance of the girls having drifted to some island, where of course they'd find food in plenty; or they may have been picked up by some ship on a long voyage, and we'll hear of 'em from some foreign port. There are lots of ways,

even on this trackless waste, of their being rescued."

This suggestion was made to counteract the grim certainty that the castaways had by now succumbed to starvation, if they still remained afloat. Several small islands had already been encountered and closely scanned, with the idea that the girls might have sought refuge on one of them. The main thing that kept alive the spark of hope was the fact that no vestige of the Aircraft had been seen. It would float indefinitely, whether wrecked or not, for the boat had enough air-tight compartments to sustain it even in a high sea.

On the evening of this tenth day the *Salvador* experienced the first rough weather of the trip. The day had been sultry and oppressive and toward sundown the sky suddenly darkened and a stiff breeze caught them. By midnight it was blowing a hurricane and even the sturdy captain began to have fears for the safety of the yacht.

There was little danger to the stout craft from wind or waves, but the sea in this neighborhood was treacherous and full of those rocky islets so much dreaded by mariners. Captain Krell studied his chart constantly and kept a sharp lookout ahead; but in such a night, on a practically

unknown sea, there was bound to be a certain degree of peril.

There was as little sleep for the passengers as for the crew on this eventful night. The women had been warned not to venture on deck, where it was dangerous even for the men; but Madeline Dentry would not stay below. She seemed to delight in defying the rage of the elements. Clinging to the arm of Chesty Todd, the huge bulk of whose six-feet-three stood solid as a monument, she peered through the night and followed the glare of the searchlight, now doubly useful, for it showed the pilot a clear sea ahead.

Mr. Tupper bumped into them, embraced Chesty for support and then bounded to the rail, to which he clung desperately.

"Why are you on deck?" asked Madeline, sternly. "Go below at once!"

Just then a roll of the yacht slid him across the deck, tumbled him against the poop and then carried him sprawling into the scuppers. When he recovered his breath Mr. Tupper crawled cautiously to the companionway and disappeared into the cabin.

Steve and Mr. Cumberford had lashed themselves to the rail and in spite of the drenching spray continued to peer into the wild night with fearful intensity. Both were sick at heart, for

they knew if the girls had managed to survive till now, their tiny boat would be unable to weather the storm. Every shriek of the wind, which often resembled a human cry, set them shivering with terror.

It was toward morning when the glare of the searchlight suddenly revealed a dark peak just ahead. Stephen Kane and Mr. Cumberford saw it, even as the warning scream of the lookout rang in their ears. Captain Krell saw it, and marveling at its nearness, sprang to the wheel. Madeline and Chesty saw it, too, and instinctively the big fellow put his arms around her as if to shield her.

Wild cries resounded from the deck; the bells rang frantically; the engines stopped short and then reversed just as a huge wave came from behind, caught the *Salvador* on its crest and swept her forward in its onward rush. Two men threw their weight upon the wheel without effect; the propeller was raised by the wave above the water line and whirred and raced madly in the air, while beneath the gleam of the searchlight a monstrous mass of rock seemed swiftly advancing to meet the fated ship.

Past the port side, where Madeline and her escort clung, swept a jagged point of rock; the yacht bumped with a force that sent everyone

aboard reeling forward in a struggling heap; then it trembled, moaned despairingly and lay still, while the wave that had carried it to its doom flooded the decks with tons of water and receded to gloat over the mischief it had caused.

The searchlight was out; blackness surrounded the bruised and bewildered men and women who struggled to regain their feet, while in their ears echoed a chorus of terrifying shrieks not of the wind, but so evidently emanating from living creatures that they added materially to the panic of the moment.

Chesty Todd released Madeline, gasping and half drowned, from the tangle of humanity in the bow, and succeeded in getting her to the rail. The bow of the yacht was high and it lay over on one side, so that the deck was at a difficult angle.

"Are—are we sinking?" asked the girl, confused and unnerved by the calamity.

"No, indeed," replied Chesty, his mouth to her ear. "We can't sink, now, for we're on solid ground and lying as still as a stuffed giraffe."

"Oh, what shall we do?" she cried, wringing her hands. "If we are wrecked we can't save Orissa—perhaps we can't save ourselves! Oh, what shall we do?—what shall we do?"

The boy saw that the shock had destroyed her

usual poise and he could feel her trembling as she clung to him.

"My advice," he said quietly, "is that we all get to bed and have a wink of sleep. It has been a long and exciting day for us, hasn't it?"

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE BLUFF

Sybil clapped her hands gleefully and looked at Orissa in triumph.

"The rubber is mine!" she cried. "You now owe me sixteen boxes of chocolates, nine of caramels and twelve of mixed bonbons—enough to stock a candy store. Tell you what I'll do, Commodore Columbus; I'll pit my desert island and my man Friday against your fleet of galleys and the favor of Queen Isabella, and it shall be the best three out of five games. Are *you* game, my dear Discoverer?"

Orissa laughed.

"You ought to give me odds, Crusoe, for you are the more skillful checker player," she replied. "But I won't play any more to-day. This heat is dreadfully oppressive and from the looks of the sky I'm afraid a storm is brewing."

"What? A rain storm?" asked Sybil, jumping up to go outside the tent and examine the sky.

"Rain, hail, thunder, lightning and tornadoes; anything is likely to follow a storm in this lati-

tude," declared Orissa, following her. "I think, Sybil, we ought to make all as safe and secure as possible, in case of emergency, while we have the time."

"What can we do?" asked Sybil. "I won't mind the storm very much, if it doesn't have lightning. That's the only thing I'm afraid of."

Orissa examined the sky critically.

"I predict high winds," she presently said, "and high winds might endanger our property. Let us get to the beach, first, and see what may be done to protect the Aircraft."

They found the flying-machine fairly well protected by the walls of the ravine in which it lay, but as the big upper plane offered a tempting surface to the wind Orissa set to work and removed it, a task that consumed two full hours. Then she wired the framework to a big rock, for additional security, and carrying the canvas from the plane between them, the girls returned to their tent.

"Will our house stand much of a wind?" asked Sybil.

"It is rather exposed, on this bluff," replied Orissa, doubtfully. "I think it will be wise for us to pile more rocks upon the edges. The wire will hold, I'm sure, for it is nickel-steel, and if

we close the ends of the tents securely we may escape damage."

"All right; I'm glad to have something to do," cried Sybil, picking up a rock. "We'll build a regular parapet, if you say so."

This was exactly what they did. In spite of the oppressive heat the two girls worked faithfully piling the rocks around the tent, until they had raised a parapet nearly half its height. They were inspired to take this precaution by the glowering aspect of the sky, which grew more threatening as the afternoon waned.

Finally Orissa wiped the perspiration from her brow and exclaimed: "That'll do, I'm sure, Syb. And now I'm ready for dinner. What's to eat?"

Sybil made a grimace.

"Bananas and jelly," she replied. "Could you conceive a more horrible combination?"

"Meat all gone?"

"We've part of a baked crab; that's all."

"And the lettuce. I shall have crab salad, with bananas for dessert."

"A salad without lemon or vinegar is the limit," declared Sybil. "I shall stick to bananas and jelly."

Their appetites were still good and Orissa really enjoyed her salad, which she seasoned with salt which they had obtained by evaporating sea-

water. The bananas were getting to be a trifle irksome to the palate, but as food they were nourishing and satisfying. Neither of the castaways grumbled much at the lack of ordinary food, being grateful at heart that they were able to escape starvation.

The storm burst upon them just after dark and its violence increased hour by hour. There was little rain, and no lightning at all, but the wind held high revel and fluttered the canvas of the tent so powerfully that the girls, huddled anxiously in bed, feared the frail shelter would be torn to shreds.

But the plane-cloth used by Stephen Kane was wonderfully strong and had been sized with a composition that prevented the wind from penetrating it. Therefore it resisted the gale nobly, and after a time the fears of the two girls subsided to such a degree that they dozed at times and toward morning, when the wind subsided, sank into deep sleep. The hooting of the owls no longer had power to keep them awake, and on this night the owls were less in evidence than usual, perhaps deterred from leaving their nests by the storm.

Weather changes are abrupt in the semi-tropics. The morning dawned cool and delightful and the sun shone brilliantly. There was a slight breeze

remaining, but not more than enough to flutter Orissa's locks as she unfastened the flap of the tent and walked out upon the bluff to discover if the Aircraft was still safe.

It lay at the bottom of the ravine, in plain sight from where she stood, and seemed quite undisturbed. Orissa turned her eyes toward the distant island, let them sweep the tumbling waves of the ocean and finally allowed them to rest upon the bay at the east, where they had first landed. Then she uttered an involuntary cry that echoed shrilly among the crags.

A ship lay stranded upon the shelving beach—fully half its length upon dry land!

The cry aroused Sybil, who came running from the tent rubbing her eyes and with an anxious face.

"What's up, Ris?" she demanded.

Orissa pointed a trembling finger across the rock-strewn plain to the bay, and Sybil looked and gave a gasp of delight.

"Oh, Orissa, we're saved—we're saved!" she murmured. Then, sinking upon the sand, she covered her face with her hands and began to cry.

But the air-maid was too interested to weep; she was looking hard at the boat.

"Isn't it Madeline Dentry's yacht?" she asked.

"Yes; I'm sure it is. Then they've been search-

ing for us and the storm has wrecked them. Sybil, your father and Steve may be on that ship, alive or—or——"

Sybil sprang up.

"Do you see anyone?" she asked eagerly.

"No; it's too far away, and the sun interferes. I'll get the glasses."

She was quite composed now and her quiet demeanor did much to restore Sybil's self-possession. Orissa brought the binoculars, looked through them for a time and then handed the glasses to her chum.

"Not a soul in sight, that I can see," she remarked. "Try it yourself."

Sybil had no better luck.

"Can they all be drowned?" she inquired in horrified tones.

"I think not. They may have abandoned the wreck, during the storm, or they may be hidden from us by the side of the boat, which lies keeled over in the opposite direction from us."

"Can't we go there, Orissa, and find out?"

"Yes, dear; at once. The tide is out, and although there is quite a sea left from last night's hurricane I think we can manage the trip, by way of the sands, with perfect safety."

Each tore a couple of bananas from the bunch and then they ran down the incline to the beach.

Knowing every turn in the coast and every difficult place, they were able to scorn the waves that occasionally swept over their feet, as if longing to draw them into their moist embraces.

CHAPTER XV

BOAT AHOY!

The first indication of dawn found anxious faces peering over the side of the *Salvador*. Passengers and crew gathered at the lower angle and inspected the position of the boat with absolute amazement.

"Never, in all my experience," said Captain Krell, "have I heard of so remarkable a wreck. We struck the only channel that would have floated us; a few yards to either side and we would have been crushed to kindling wood. As it is, we lie high and dry on this shelf—a natural dry dock—and not a timber is cracked."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Madeline.

"Quite sure, Miss Dentry. We have made a thorough investigation. But I do not wish to create any false hopes. Our condition is nearly as desperate as if we were a total wreck."

"You mean we can't get the yacht off again?"

"I fear not. Even a duplicate of that gigantic wave which hurled us here would be unable to float us off, for our tremendous headway carried

us beyond the reach of any tide. This island is of rock formation. I know at a glance that a solid bed of rock is under us. Therefore we cannot dig a channel to relaunch the *Salvador.*"

"Couldn't we blast a channel?" asked Mr. Tupper.

The captain merely gave him a reproachful glance.

"To be sure," replied Chesty Todd, seriously. "We'll have Kane invent a sort of dynamite that will blast the rocks and won't hurt the ship. Good idea, Mr. Tupper. Clever, sir; very clever."

Mr. Tupper glared at the boy resentfully, but his wife said in a mild tone of rebuke: "Really, Martin, my dear, the suggestion was idiotic."

The steward came crawling toward them with a coffeepot, followed by a man juggling a tray of cups. It was quite an acrobatic feat to navigate the incline, but they succeeded and everyone accepted the coffee gratefully.

"This place is nothing but a rock; an extinct volcano, probably," remarked Madeline, gazing thoughtfully over the island.

Chesty, having finished his coffee, climbed to the elevated side opposite.

"Here's a far better view of the place," he called. "It's quite a——" He stopped short,

staring fixedly at a white speck far up on the bluff beside the low mountain.

They waited breathlessly for him to continue. Then Steve, reading the expression on Chesty's face, quickly clambered to a place beside him. As he looked he began to tremble and his face grew red and then pallid.

"Mr. Cumberford," called the press agent, "bring your glasses, please."

"What is it?" pleaded Madeline.

"Why, something—just—curious, Miss Dentry. We can't say what it is, as yet, but——"

They were all scrambling up the incline by this time and soon all eyes were directed upon the white speck. Mr. Cumberford focused his glasses upon the spot.

"Ah," said he presently; "this interests me; it does, indeed!"

"Is it a—a—tent?" inquired Steve, a catch in his voice.

"Looks like it," was the reply; "but not a regulation tent. Seems more like—like—— Here, see for yourself, Steve."

Steve seized the binoculars.

"I think—it's—the—plane-cloth!" he gasped.

Mr. Tupper lost his balance and slid down the deck, landing with a thud against the opposite rail. That relieved the tension and a laugh—the

first heard on the *Salvador* since she left port—greeted the gentleman's mishap.

"Why—if it's the plane-cloth, the girls are alive!" cried Madeline.

"To be sure," added Chesty, with joyful intonation, "and doubtless enjoying their outing."

The discovery changed the current of all thoughts and led them to forget their own calamity. The *Salvador* carried a small gasoline launch and two life-boats, all of which were in good condition.

"May we take the launch, Miss Dentry?" pleaded Steve.

"I was about to order it lowered," she said. "Can you run it, Mr. Kane?"

"Certainly," he replied.

"Then I shall go with you. It will carry six comfortably, and more uncomfortably; but as we may have passengers on our return trip only four had better go."

Steve ran to assist in lowering the launch. It had to be unlashed from its rack, first of all, and the tank filled with gasoline, the engine oiled and the boat prepared for action. The men worked with a will, however, and within half an hour the launch was lowered to the rocks and slid safely into the water. The landing-steps being impracticable, a rope ladder was lowered and by this

means Madeline easily descended to the launch. Mr. Cumberford followed, as a matter of course, but Chesty Todd modestly waited to be invited to make the fourth voyager.

"Come along, sir," said Miss Dentry, and he eagerly obeyed.

"How about food?" he suggested.

The chef, a fat little Frenchman who was much interested in the fate of the Flying Girl and her chum, had foreseen this demand and now lowered a hamper.

"Any water in it?" asked Chesty.

"Certainmente, monsieur."

"All right. Let 'er go."

Steve started the engine and the little craft quickly shot out of the bay into the open sea and took the long swells beautifully. Rounding the point, Kane kept as close to the shore as he dared, making for the place where the bluff began to rise.

"Boat ahoy!" cried a clear voice, so suddenly that they nearly capsized the launch in their first surprise. And there were the two lost damsels prancing and dancing up and down the beach, waving their handkerchiefs and laughing and crying with joy at beholding their friends.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ISLAND KINGDOM

It was a merry reunion, in spite of the dangers that were past and the tribulations that threatened. Because the yacht's deck afforded precarious footing they all landed on the flat rocky shore, where the breakfast, hastily prepared by the chef, was served to the united company.

"My greatest suffering," said Sybil, nestling close to her father, "was for want of coffee. I've dreamed of coffee night after night, and hoped I would be privileged to taste it again before I was called to the happy hunting grounds."

"Ah; that interests me; it does, really," said Mr. Cumberford, filling her cup anew. "But—who knows, dear?—you might have reached the happy coffee-grounds."

They laughed at any absurd remark just now, and when Orissa related how they had subsisted of late on bananas and jelly you may be sure the castaways were plied with all the delicacies the ship's larder afforded.

Most of the day was spent in exchanging

stories of the adventures both parties had encountered since the Hydro-Aircraft ran away. Everyone wanted to add an incident or tell some personal experience, and it was all so interesting that no one was denied the privilege of talking.

But afterward, when an elaborate dinner was served in the cabin—the table having been propped level to hold the plates—they began to canvass the future and to speculate upon the possibility of getting to civilization again.

"Our situation is far from hopeless," remarked Steve, who was now bright and cheery as of old. "We have the launch and the lifeboats, and Orissa says the Aircraft is in fine condition again. All the trouble was caused by that unlucky aluminum chest—and the fact that my steering gear was too frail."

"I wouldn't call the aluminum chest unlucky," said Sybil. "Without it we should have suffered many privations, for it carried our blankets and provisions as well as our tools."

"But it was unfortunate that you didn't bolt it securely," added Orissa.

"Could we venture some two hundred and eighty miles in open boats?" inquired Madeline.

"We could if obliged to," asserted young Kane. "Of course, after we got into the track of coastwise ships, we might be picked up. But I do not

like to abandon this beautiful yacht, which must be worth a fortune and is not damaged to any extent. I believe the best plan will be for me to fly home in my machine and secure a boat to come here and pull the yacht off the beach. There is a whole barrel of gasoline aboard, intended to supply the launch, so there is no longer any lack of fuel for our Aircraft."

They canvassed this plan very seriously and to all it seemed an excellent idea. But the engineer, an Irishman named O'Reilly, respectfully suggested the possibility of getting the yacht launched by means of a tackle, using her own engines for power.

Steve caught at this idea and said they would try it the following morning.

Everyone retired early, for one and all were exhausted by the trying experiences they had passed through. The girls, however, warned them that the owls would interfere seriously with their sleep. It was not an easy matter to rest, even in the comfortable berths, on account of the slanting position of the ship. Those berths on the right side tipped downward and the mattresses had to be bolstered up on the edges to prevent the occupants from rolling out. On the opposite side the sleeper was pushed to the wall and the mattress had to be padded in the corner

where the wall and bunk met. But they managed it, after a fashion, and Sybil and Orissa, at least, slept soundly and peacefully, the luxury of a bed being so great a relief from their former inconvenient rock "altar."

The hoots of the owls proved very distracting to the newcomers, and Mrs. Tupper declared she would go mad, or die painfully, if obliged to endure such a screeching for many nights. Even the crew grumbled and there were many tired eyes next morning.

As soon as breakfast was over they set to work to right the yacht, Steve overseeing the work because of his mechanical experience. A pulley was attached, by means of a chain, to a peak of rock on the point opposite the high side of the yacht, and then a strong cable was run through the pulley, one end being fastened to the main-mast and the other to the anchor-windlass, which was operated by the engine. The stoker got up steam and then O'Reilly started the engines very slowly. Lying as it did on a shelf of solid rock, which had been washed smooth by centuries of waves, there was only the resistance of the yacht's weight to overcome; and, although it required all the power the cable would stand, the boat gradually came upright until it stood upon a level keel. Then the men braced it securely with rocks, on

either side the bow, to hold it in position, after which Steve declared that part of the task had been accomplished to his entire satisfaction.

It was indeed a relief to all on board to be able to tread a level deck again, for, although there still remained a decided slant from bow to stern it did not materially interfere with walking, as had the sharp side slant.

The next task was to arrange the tackle so that the engines would pull the yacht off the beach into deep water. But in spite of every effort this plan failed entirely. The boat would not budge an inch and after breaking the wire cable again and again, until it was practically useless, the undertaking had to be abandoned.

"It's up to the airship to rescue the party, I guess," sighed Steve, as they sat at dinner after the energetic and discouraging day's work was over.

"Do you know, there's a big island just west of here," said Orissa, thoughtfully. "Through our glasses we could see that it is green and fertile, and I've an idea it is inhabited. Wouldn't it be a good idea to run the launch over there before Steve undertakes his journey, and see if we can't secure help to get the yacht off the beach?"

They all became interested in the proposition at once.

"How far is the island?" asked Mr. Cumberford.

"Only a few miles; perhaps an hour's run in the launch."

"Then let us try it, by all means," proposed the captain.

"We will run over there the first thing in the morning, with Miss Dentry's consent," decided Steve.

Madeline heartily agreed and as the sea was enticingly calm the next morning a party was made up to visit the larger island in the launch.

At first Captain Krell suggested he should go with part of his crew, saying that no one could tell what sort of people might inhabit the island, if indeed any inhabitants were to be found there; but Steve scorned the notion of danger.

"We are too near the American coast to run against cannibals or hostile tribes," he argued; "and, in any event, our mission is a decidedly peaceful one. I'll take my revolver, of course, but it won't be needed. What do you say, Mr. Cumberford?"

"I quite agree with you," replied that gentleman. "I'm going along, if only for the ride."

"So am I," said Madeline.

"Really, my dear!" began Mr. Tupper; but she silenced him with a single look.

"That means I must go as chaperon," sighed Mrs. Tupper.

"I'll be chaperon," laughed Sybil; "but as we shall go and return in a couple of hours I don't believe Madeline will really need one."

"You shall stay comfortaby on the yacht, Aunt Anna," said Madeline. "Who else wants to go? We can carry six, you know."

It was soon arranged to add Mr. Radley-Todd and Orissa to the four, thus completing the complement of the launch.

Just before they set off Monsieur Rissette, the alert chef, appeared with his hamper of lunch, for he had an established idea that no one should depart, even on an hour's journey, without a proper supply of food. Then, merrily waving adieus to those on board, the explorers glided out of the bay into the open sea.

Rounding the north end of their islet they saw clearly the large island ahead, and Steve headed the launch directly toward it.

The trip consumed rather more than the hour Orissa had figured on, but it was a light-hearted, joyous party, and they beguiled the way with conversation and laughter.

"I am quite sure," said Madeline, "that I am enjoying this experience far more than I would a trip to Hawaii. Think of it! A chase, a rescue

and a wreck, all included in one adventure. I'm rather sorry it's about over and we are to return to civilization."

"Sybil and I have had a glorious time," added Orissa. "Barring the fact that we were a bit worried over our fate, those days when we played Crusoe and Columbus on a forsaken island were full of interest and excitement. I know now that I enjoyed it thoroughly."

"I quite envy you that delightful experience," asserted Madeline.

"Don't," said Sybil. "The adventure wasn't all pleasant, by any means. The hoots of those dreadful birds will ring in my ears for years to come; the food was far from satisfying and I piled rocks and tramped and sweated until I was worn to a frazzle. If we had not invented our checker set I believe we would have become raving maniacs by the time you found us."

As they drew near to the island they found it even more green and beautiful than they had suspected.

"It's queer," said Steve, eyeing the place thoughtfully, "how very imperfect those seamen's charts are. The one Captain Krell has indicates nothing but barren rocks in these seas. Not one is deemed important enough to name; yet here is a

good-sized island that is really inviting enough to attract inhabitants."

"And, by Jove, it has 'em!" cried Chesty Todd, pointing eagerly to a thin streak leading skyward. "See that smoke? That means human beings, or I'm a lobster."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford. "That interests me; it does, really. Head around to the right, Steve; that's where we'll find the natives."

Steve obeyed. Skirting the shore of the island he rounded the northern point and found before him a peculiar inlet. The shore was rocky and rather high, but in one place two great pillars of rock rose some fifty feet in the air, while between them lay a pretty bay which extended far inland. They afterward found this was the mouth of a small river, which broadened into a bay at its outlet.

As the launch turned into this stretch of water, moving at reduced speed, their eyes were gladdened by one of the loveliest natural vistas they had ever beheld. The slope from the table-land above to the inlet was covered upon both sides with palms, flowering shrubs and fruit trees, all of which showed evidence of care. A quarter of a mile up the little bay was a little dock to which were moored several boats. The largest of these was a sixty-foot launch, which made Madeline's

little craft look like a baby. Two sailboats and a trio of rowboats, all rather crude in design, completed the flotilla. On the end of the dock two men stood, motionless, as if awaiting them.

"Why, they're not natives at all," exclaimed Sybil, in a low voice. "They—they're clothed!"

So they were, but in quite a remarkable fashion. Their feet were bare, their trousers ragged and soiled; but they wore blue vests highly embroidered in yellow silk, with velvet jackets and red sashes tied around their waists. Add to this outfit, peaked Panama hats with broad, curling brims, and a revolver and knife stuck in each sash, and you will not wonder that our friends viewed this odd couple with unfeigned amazement.

One was a tall, thin man with but one good eye, which, however, was black and of piercing character. His face was sullen and reserved. The second man was short and fat, with profuse whiskers of fiery red and a perfectly bald head—a combination that gave him the appearance of a stage comedian. The skin of both was of that peculiar dingy brown color peculiar to Mexicans and some Spaniards.

The little one, with hat in hand, was bowing with exaggerated courtesy; the taller one stood frowning and immovable.

When Steve steered the launch alongside the

dock a broad roadway came into sight, leading through the trees to the higher elevation beyond, where stood a white house of fair size which had a veranda in front. The architecture was of Spanish order and in its setting of vines and trees it looked very picturesque. There were climbing roses in profusion and gorgeous beds of flowers could be seen in the foreground.

Despite the appearance of the two men, who might easily be taken for brigands, the place was so pretty and peaceful and bore such undoubted evidences of civilization that the visitors had no hesitation in landing.

Chesty leaped to the dock first and assisted the three girls to alight beside him. Mr. Cumberford followed and Steve tied up to an iron ring in the dock and also stepped ashore. The tall man had not moved, so far, except that his one dark eye roved from one member of the party to another, but the little fat man continued to bow low as each one stepped ashore, and they accepted it as a sort of welcome. Neither had uttered a word, however, so Mr. Cumberford stepped forward and said:

"Do you speak English?"

They shook their heads.

"Ah! that is unfortunate. Can you tell me, then, the name of this island, and who inhabits it?"

"Of course not, Daddy," cried Sybil. "Try 'em in Spanish, Steve."

But before Stephen, who could speak a little Spanish, had time to advance, the men turned abruptly, beckoned the strangers to follow, and deliberately walked up the broad pathway toward the dwelling.

"Well?" inquired Steve, doubtfully.

"Let's follow," said Chesty. "I've an idea these are hired men, and they're taking us to be welcomed by their master."

"Interesting, isn't it?" muttered Mr. Cumberford, but with one accord they moved forward in the wake of their guides.

CHAPTER XVII

DON MIGUEL DEL BORGITIS

Halfway up the road they noticed on the left a large clearing, in which stood a group of thatched huts. Some women and children—all with dark skins and poorly dressed—were lounging around the doorways. These stood silently as the strangers passed by. A little farther along three men, attired in exactly the same manner as the two who were escorting them, were cultivating a garden patch. They gave no indication they were aware of the presence of strangers.

There was something uncanny—wholly unnatural—about the manner of their reception and even about the place itself, that caused some of them to harbor forebodings that all was not right. Yet they had experienced no opposition, so far — no unfriendliness whatsoever.

Up to the broad veranda they were led, and this, now viewed closely, showed signs of considerable neglect. The house, built of rough boards, needed whitewashing again; the elaborate stained-glass

windows were thick with dust; the furnishings of the wide veranda, which were somewhat prodigal, seemed weather-stained and unkempt. On a small wicker table was a dirty siphon bottle and some soiled glasses with bugs and flies crawling over them. Beside these stood a tray of roughly made cheroots.

The fat man at once disappeared through the open doorway of the dwelling, but the tall man faced the strangers and, spreading out his arms as if to forbid their entrance, pointed to the chairs and benches scattered in profusion about the veranda.

"Invited to sit," interpreted Mr. Cumberford. "Interesting—very."

Suddenly a huge form filled the doorway, inspecting the newcomers with a quick, comprehensive glance. The man was nearly as tall as Chesty Todd, but not so well built. Instead of being athletic, he possessed a superabundance of avoirdupois, evidently the result of high living. He was clothed all in white flannel, but wore a blue linen shirt with a soiled collar and a glaring red necktie in which glittered a big diamond. Jewels were on his fingers, too, and even on his thumbs, and a gold chain passed around his neck fell in folds across his breast and finally ended in his watch-pocket. On his feet were red slippers and on his head a

Suddenly a huge form filled the doorway, inspecting the newcomers with a quick, comprehensive glance.

sombrero such as the others had worn. A man of perhaps thirty-five years of age, rather handsome with his large eyes and carefully curled mustache, but so wholly unconventional as to excite wonder rather than admiration.

He had merely paused in the doorway for that one rapid glance. Immediately he advanced with a brisk step, exclaiming:

"Welcome, señors and señoritas — Americaños all — most joyous welcome. You the Spanish speak? No! It cannot matter, for I speak the English. I am so pleasured that my humble home is now honored by your presence. You make me glad—happy—in rapture. You do not know to where—to whom—you have come? Imagine! I am Don Miguel del Borgitis, and this"—extending his arms with a proud gesture—"my own Island of Borgitis—a kingdom—of individual property, however small, for it owes allegiance to no other nation on earth!"

This was spoken very impressively, while the shrewd eyes read their faces to determine the degree of awe created.

"Yes," he went on, giving them no chance to reply, "I am really King—King of Borgitis—but with modesty I call myself Don Miguel del Borgitis. As such I welcome you. As such I take you to my arms in friendship. Observe, then, all

my kingdom is yours; you shall reign in my place; you shall command me; for does not Don Miguel ever place his friends above himself?"

This seemed cordial enough, certainly, but it was rather embarrassing to find an answer to such effusiveness. Don Miguel, however, did not seem to expect an answer. With merely an impressive pause, as if to drive the words home, he continued: "May I, then, be honored by a recital of your names and station?"

"To be sure," said Mr. Cumberford. "You—er—interest me, Don Miguel; you do, really. Quite a relief, you see, to find a gentleman, a civilized gentleman, in these wilds, and——"

"My island kingdom is very grand—very important—Señor Americano," interrupted Don Miguel, evidently piqued at the use of the term "wilds." "In effect have I reign over three islands—the one from which you now come, the one to the west of here, and — the Grand Island Borgitis! Three Islands and one owner — One King — with privilege to decree life and death to his devoted subjects. But you have more to say."

They were a bit startled to hear that he knew they came from the island of the owls. But they reflected that some of his people might have watched the progress of their launch.

Mr. Cumberford introduced his party to Don

Miguel, one by one, afterward briefly relating the aërial trip of the two girls, the search for them by the yacht and the unfortunate beaching of the *Salvador* on the island during the recent storm, ending with the surprising reunion of the party and their desire to secure help to get the launch into deep water again, that they might return home.

To all this Don Miguel listened intently, his head a little to one side, his eyes turning critically to each person mentioned during the recital. Then said he, more soberly than before:

"How unfortunate that your ship is wreck!"

"Oh, it is not wrecked," returned Madeline. "It is merely stuck on those rocks—'beached' is, I think the proper word."

"Then, alas! it is wreck."

"It is not injured in the least, sir," declared Steve.

Don Miguel's face brightened at this statement, but he controlled his elation and responded sadly:

"But it is no longer a ship, for you cannot get it off the land."

"Not without your kind assistance, I fear," said Miss Dentry.

"Make me obliged by resuming your seats," requested Don Miguel. Then he clapped his hands, and the red-bearded man appeared. "Re-

freshments, Pietro!'' He offered the cheroots to the men, and when they refused selected one for himself and lighted it. Then, leaning back in his arm-chair, he regarded his guests musingly and said:

''It is laughable. Really, it amuses one! But under the Spanish Grant by which I hold my islands—my kingdom—I am exclusively owner of all wrecks on my shores. In fact, were you not my dear friends, I could take your yacht, which I now own because it lies wreck on my coast.''

''But it is *not* wrecked!'' asserted Steve, frowning, for he was beginning to suspect Don Miguel.

''Perhaps not, since you tell me so; but I will see. I will see for myself. Ah, the poor refreshments — the offering of hospitality to a king's friends. Partake, is my earnest implore, and so honor your humble host — Don Miguel del Borgitis.''

The tall man and the short man brought wines, liquors and glasses, with a fresh siphon of clear water. Following them came a sour-faced woman of middle age and a pretty young girl of perhaps sixteen years—pretty in the Spanish fashion, with plump cheeks, languid dark eyes and raven hair. These last carried trays of fruits and cake, which they passed to the company. The woman's face was expressionless; that of the girl evinced eager

curiosity and interest; but neither spoke nor seemed to receive the notice of the royal Don Miguel.

When they had all positively refused to accept any of the strong drink, the Don helped himself liberally to a milky liquor diluted with water, which he called pulque. As he sipped this he said to them:

"The life here on Borgitis is grand—magnificent—entrancing—as you will easily conceive. But it is also lonely. I have here no equals with whom I may freely associate. So it delights me to receive you as guests. May you long enjoy my hospitality—it is a toast which I drink with fervency."

"We return to the yacht at once," said Steve, stiffly.

"My mansion is roomy and comforting," continued the other, as if he had not heard, "and here are no owls to annoy one. Some day I will take you to visit the third island of my kingdom. It is called Chica—after my daughter, here." He glanced at the young girl, as he spoke, and she cast down her eyes, seeming frightened.

Mr. Cumberford arose.

"Sir," said he, "we thank you for your hospitality, which we regret we are unable to further accept. Let us come to the point of our errand. We need your assistance and are willing to pay

for it—liberally, if need be. You have plenty of men here, I observe, and a large launch. Send a crew with us to our island——"

"My island, señor, if you please."

"Very well. Send a crew of men to help us, and come along yourself, if you like. But whatever you do, kindly do it at once, as we have no time to waste."

He spoke positively, in a way that required an answer; but Don Miguel merely took a cake from the tray, and as he munched it said casually in Spanish, as if addressing the air: "Prepare my launch; have the men in readiness; lock the little boat securely."

Without a glance at his master, the one-eyed man deliberately left the veranda and walked down the path. Steve pricked up his ears. He understood the carefully veiled command, and it nettled him.

"What little boat do you refer to, sir?" he pointedly asked.

Don Miguel gave a start, but tossed off the contents of his glass, and rose.

"I shall prepare to go at once to visit your yacht, with my own men and in my own launch," said he. "You will be good enough to amuse yourselves here until I send you the word that I am ready to depart."

With this he lazily stretched his big body, yawned, and turned his back on his "beloved guests," to leave the veranda and proceed leisurely down the path to the inlet.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MASK OFF

"Come!" cried Steve, impatiently. "The Don is either a fool or a rascal, and in either event I propose to keep an eye on him."

"Quite right," said Chesty Todd, nodding approval.

As with one accord they rose and started to leave the veranda the fat little man with the red whiskers barred their way, removing his hat to indulge in his absurd bow.

"My noble master has desire that you remain his guests," said he in bad English. "Some time will he send word he is ready for you to depart."

"Out of the way, fellow," said Chesty, pushing him aside.

"My noble master has desire that you remain his guests," repeated the man, moodily, and there was a defiant twinkle in his pig-like eyes that indicated he had received positive orders to detain the strangers.

But Mr. Radley-Todd's ire was aroused.

"Stand back!" he cried threateningly. "Your master is not our master."

"Very true, Chesty," said Mr. Cumberford; and then they all hurried down the path toward the inlet. They were not three minutes behind Don Miguel, yet as they reached the dock the big launch left it, filled with dark-skinned men. In the stern stood Don Miguel, smoking his cheroot, and he made them an elaborate bow.

"Have patience, dear guests," said he. "I will satisfy myself if your boat is wreck or is not wreck, and soon will I return to consult with you. Kindly excuse until I have investigation made. Oblige me to use my island as if it were your own."

"The rascal!" cried Mr. Cumberford, as the boat of Don Miguel swept down the inlet. "Tumble into the launch, girls, quick! I believe we can get to the yacht before he does."

But the girls hesitated to obey, for Steve and Chesty Todd were bending over the bow of the launch, where the rope hawser had been replaced by a heavy chain, which was fastened by a huge padlock.

Steve picked up an iron bar, twisted it in the chain and endeavored to wrench the iron ring from its socket; but it was firmly embedded in the dock, being held by a powerful cement. Then

he tried breaking away the launch, but the fastenings held firmly.

"No use, Steve," said Chesty, squatting down on the dock. "We must have the key. Question is, who's got it? That pirate, or—or——"

"He's a pirate, all right," said Sybil, angrily.

"What do you think he intends to do?" Madeline quietly asked.

"Take the folks on the yacht by surprise, capture the ship and then claim it is his, because it is beached upon his island," replied Steve.

"How absurd!" exclaimed Orissa.

"Yes; but the scoundrel knows no law," declared Mr. Cumberford. "In this lost and forgotten island he has played the tyrant with a high hand; I can see that by the humble subjection of his people; and so he thinks he can rob us with impunity."

"He is mistaken, though," asserted Madeline greatly annoyed. "If this is really an independent island, I shall send an armed ship here to demand reparation—and force it. If the Don lies, and he is under the domain of any recognized nation, then our government shall take the matter up."

"To be sure," said Mr. Cumberford. "Interesting; very. Provided, of course, we—we——"

"Go on, sir."

"Er—er—it is really a pretty island, and—interesting," he mumbled.

"Daddy means," said Sybil, "that Don Miguel has no intention of letting us get back to civilization again, provided the yacht proves to be worth taking—and keeping."

"That's it, exactly," said Chesty; "only Mr. Cumberford did not like to disturb your equanimity. But he sized up the situation, as we all did. Eh, Steve?"

Steve nodded, looking gloomily at the three girls.

"How many men did he take with him?" asked Madeline.

"About fifteen. I tried to count 'em," said Mr. Todd. "But they did not seem to be armed."

"There are seven on the yacht, besides Mr. Tupper, who doesn't count; and they have no arms, either, that I know of."

"They won't be expecting to defend themselves, anyhow," observed Chesty. "Therefore the yacht is as good as captured."

"And with the noble Don in possession," added Sybil, "our plans for a homeward voyage are knocked sky-high."

"The yacht will be a great find for him," remarked Mr. Cumberford; "so I imagine he will

condemn it as 'wreck' on his shores and keep it for himself."

"With certainty, señor," said a soft voice beside him.

They all turned to find that the Spanish girl had quietly joined their group. Behind her came limping the Red-beard, sullen and muttering at his rebuff. The girl faced Pietro and uttered a sharp command in Spanish. He hesitated, mumbled a reply and retreated up the path.

"So you think Don Miguel will keep my yacht?" asked Madeline, approaching the pretty child and speaking in a kindly tone.

"I do, señorita. But his name is not Don Miguel del Borgitis, as he said. He is Ramon Ganza, a fugitive from Mexico, where he robbed a bank of much money and escaped. He came here in his launch with ten men, and has been hiding for many years in this island, where no people lived before he came."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Madeline; "a criminal and a refugee! And you are his daughter?"

"No, señorita. He said so, but he lied. He lies always, when he speaks. He coaxed me away from my people in Mazatlan, when he came there to buy provisions, saying I would become a princess. But I am merely a housemaid, in truth."

"How many years has he lived on this island?" inquired Mr. Cumberford.

"I do not know, señor. But it is many. He has built the house, yonder, or rather he has forced his poor men to build it. Ramon loves to pose as a royal Don, but I do not think he is of noble birth. Once every year he goes to Mexico or the United States for supplies, and sometimes he coaxes others to come back with him, and be his slaves."

"And do the people love their master?" asked Madeline.

"No. They hate him, but they fear him. Not one who has ever come here has gone away again, for he dares not let them return to tell where he is hiding. Now there are seventeen men and nine women here. With you, and those he will fetch from your yacht, there will be many more; but none of you will ever leave here with Ramon's consent," declared the girl.

"Then we will leave without it," remarked Mr. Todd, easily.

She gave him a quick, eager look.

"Will you dare to oppose Ramon, then?" she asked.

"On occasion we are rather daring," said Chesty, smiling at her simplicity. "The fellow ought to be arrested and given up to justice."

"Oh, if you would do that, we could all go away!" said the child, clasping her hands ecstatically. "Please arrest him, sir; I beg you to."

"We'll see about it, little one. Meantime, how can we get the key to unlock this chain?"

"Would you follow Ramon?" she asked.

"That is our greatest ambition, just now."

"Then I'll get you the key. Pietro has it."

"The Red-beard?"

"Yes. Pietro is my friend. He is not so bad as some of the other men."

"They must be a sorry lot," decided Chesty. "Come on, then, Chica; I'll help you to interview Pietro."

The man was sitting on a rock nursing his grievances.

"The key, Pietro," said Chica.

"No," he answered surlily.

"I want it, Pietro."

"He'll whip me. But then, he'll whip me anyhow, for not to stop his 'guests.' Take the key, Chica. Pah! a few lashes. Who cares?"

He tossed the key upon the ground at her feet and Chesty promptly picked it up. The girl looked hard at Red-beard.

"You will not be whipped," she said softly. "It is all right, Pietro. The Americaños will arrest

Ramon Ganza and deliver him up to justice; they have promised it; so you will be safe. Come with me. Our new friends need guns."

"What!" The man fairly gasped in his amazement at her temerity.

"Our new friends shall take all they need of Ramon's store of guns. They are not like the others who come here; the Americaños are not cowards. You will see them conquer Ramon very nicely, and with no trouble at all. Come, Pietro —the guns!"

The man slowly rose and led the way to the house, while Chesty called for Steve and then followed.

In ten minutes Chesty and Steve returned to the dock where the others awaited them, and both were loaded with rifles, revolvers and ammunition, ruthlessly abstracted from the private stores of the island magnate.

When these were distributed, the launch unlocked and they were ready to start, Madeline turned to Chica.

"Get in, dear," said she. "I think it will be best for you to come with us. Provided we ourselves manage to escape, I promise to take you to Mazatlan and restore you to your own people."

The child hesitated, looking at the little fat Red-beard.

"I—I'm afraid Pietro will suffer for helping us," she said.

"Ah; 'tis true," agreed Red-beard. "Unless you please will arrest Ramon, Ramon will whip me until I faint. I know; it is his habit when he is opposed."

"Get aboard, then," said Steve, impatiently. "There's room enough, and your service may come handy to us."

Somewhat to their surprise the man came aboard without an instant's hesitation, and at once Steve started the engine.

"Are any other men left upon this island?" asked Mr. Cumberford, as the launch gathered way and darted down the inlet.

"Two," said Chica. "But they have no orders to interfere with you, so they will be blind. Fourteen have gone with Ramon."

"Are they armed?" asked Orissa.

"I do not know, señorita. Francisco may be, and perhaps Tomas; but Ramon is afraid to trust many of his men with guns."

Heading out of the inlet they rounded the pillar of rock and skirted the shore until the open sea lay between them and Owl Island. Now they were able to see plainly the big launch of Ramon Ganza plodding along in advance. It had fully half an hour's start of them, yet from the distance it had

gone Steve awoke to the fact that it was not nearly so speedy as Madeline's little boat. Although the big launch had gasoline engines of comparatively modern pattern, the lines of the boat were broad and "tubby," in strong contrast with the slender, graceful waist of the *Salvador's* launch. Moreover, Ramon had neglected his machinery, as he had everything else on the island, and the engines did not work as well as they should.

"I've an idea that I can beat the pirate to the *Salvador,*" said Steve.

"By Jove!" cried Chesty; "if you could do that, old man, you'd save the day."

"What difference would it make?" inquired Madeline.

"Their plan is to take our crew by surprise, board the yacht and make prisoners of every man jack—also of Mrs. Tupper," explained Chesty. "Then, when we arrive, our capture could be easily accomplished. But if we manage to get there first, warning our men and taking them these weapons, we stand a good chance of beating off the rascally potentate and holding possession."

"They are not really pirates, I suppose," remarked Sybil.

"According to this child's story," declared Mr. Cumberford, "the man is a fugitive from justice

and so has no respect for the rights or property of anyone. Mexico, his own country, has outlawed him and doubtless if the authorities could put their hands on the fellow they'd clap him in jail and keep him there."

They considered this statement gravely.

"For which reason," remarked Chesty Todd, "Ramon Ganza is desperate. He can't afford to let us get away and carry the news of where his island retreat may be located. Therefore, good people, this is going to be a lively little scrap, so let's grit our teeth and do our level best."

CHAPTER XIX

AN EXCITING RACE

Steve was giving the engine all his attention and coaxing it to develop all the speed of which it was capable. Even with eight people aboard—two more than its regular complement—it was beginning to gain on the big boat ahead. Orissa, at the steering wheel, was also intent upon her task.

Mr. Cumberford turned to Chica.

"How did Ramon manage to build that house, and make such a big settlement on the island, all in secret?" he asked.

"Pietro knows," said she.

"In Mexico," stated Red-beard, halting at times in his English, "Ramon rob bank of much money. Then he escape in boat an' find islan'. He think it fine place for hide. So he go to Unite' State—to San Pedro—an' buy much thing with his money —much lumber—much food in tin can—many thing he will need. He hire ship to take all to his islan'. It big sail-ship, but it old an' not ver' good. In San Pedro Ramon find some Mexicans

who do bad things an' so are afraid to go back to Mexico. He say he make them rich, so they go with him on ship. I go, too.

"Storm come an' make ship leak, but we get to islan' an' unload ever'thing. Captain start to go back, but ship leak so bad he run on rocks at West Islan'. Ship go wreck an' men drown. By'mby Ramon go out to wreck, take all thing he want an' let wreck go. It now on rocks at West Islan'. No good, now."

This terse recital was listened to with astonishment.

"Interesting — very," was Mr. Cumberford's comment, and they all supported his verdict.

"Then Ramon make us build house an' make garden," continued Red-beard. "When we get mad an' not mind Ramon, he whip some of us with his own hand, an' then others scare an' work hard. Two, three time, Ramon go in launch to Mexico. He land secret, in night time, and get more men to come back with him to islan'. Nobody know him in the places he goes. One time he coax Chica from her nice home, that way, an' bring her to islan', to make her help the women work in his house."

Chica nodded.

"But now I go home," she said, confidently.

"When kind Americaños arrest Ramon, I go free."

But arresting Ramon was not so much in the thoughts of the Americaños just then as the result of the race to reach the *Salvador*. Madeline's launch was gaining steadily, but both boats were gradually drawing nearer to their destination and the problem was which could arrive first? Already the little boat had been seen and its purpose understood by the wily Mexican. He could not know how it was that the Americans had managed to secure their boat and were able to follow him so soon, but the fact that they were in his wake and quickly closing the gap between the two launches was sufficient information for the time being, and it did not particularly disturb him.

Ramon Ganza reasoned that in order to beat him to the yacht the little launch must pass near him, but in doing so he would intercept it and by grappling it with boat-hooks take it and its occupants along with him. If the Americans kept out of range and gave his boat a wide berth, he would be able, in spite of their superior speed, to beat them to the yacht by maintaining his course in a straight line.

This danger was soon appreciated by the pursuers; for, whenever they altered their course,

Ganza altered his, to head them off by getting directly in their way.

"Ah," said Mr. Cumberford, grimly, "this interests me."

"It interests us all," observed Steve, dryly. "The big boat is like a rock in our path."

Orissa looked at her brother inquiringly.

"How shall I steer?" she asked.

"We shall have to circle around them, to keep out of their way. They think that they will beat us, and they may; but I'm not sure of it—as yet."

"Is it best to argue the point, Steve?" asked Chesty.

"I really think our salvation depends on our getting to the yacht first," was the reply.

For some time after this no one spoke. The engine, under Steve's skillful handling, was doing its utmost, with never a skip or protest of any sort. The man who was running the larger boat was also crowding his engines, urged thereto by his domineering master. The sea was ideal for the race and favored both boats alike.

They continued the dodging tactics some time longer, the smaller boat being forced to the outside and unable to cut in ahead.

"Confound it!" cried Steve, much chagrined, "here's the island, and they've got the inside track."

"Yes; but something's wrong with them," remarked Mr. Cumberford. "They're slowing down."

"By Jove, that's a fact!" cried Chesty, elated.

Steve stood up and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Their engines have stopped," he said. "That's a streak of luck I hadn't banked on. Head in, Orissa. We're all right now, if they don't start again promptly."

There was evident excitement on board the larger motor boat. Ramon kicked the new engineer away and himself took his place. The engine revolved, made a brief spurt—and stopped dead. Ramon made another attempt, while his boat bobbed placidly up and down on the waves.

Meantime the launch, still keeping to its wide circle, rounded the point of rock and headed into the bay, where the *Salvador* lay with her trim white sides glistening in the sunshine.

"Quick!" cried Steve, as soon as he could be heard by those at the rail, "let down the ladder. They're after us!"

"Who is it?" demanded Mr. Tupper, curiously; but Captain Krell marked the panic on the faces of those on board the launch and issued prompt orders. The aft davits were run down in a jiffy and Steve and Chesty hooked them to the launch,

which was quickly raised with all on board and swung over the rail to the deck.

There were a few tumbles and some scrambling to get out of the boat, but at that moment Ramon Ganza's big launch swept into the bay, and the Mexican, assured by one sharp glance that his clever plan to surprise the yacht was thwarted, shut down the engines and halted his craft while he examined the situation at his leisure.

Madeline Dentry's superb yacht was indeed a prize worth winning. It was even worth running some risks to acquire. Ramon reflected that the *Salvador* and her helpless crew were really at his mercy, for they were unable to float the ship and were at present securely imprisoned. He laughed rather maliciously at their vain opposition, and said to his lieutenant, the one-eyed man:

"Very good, Francisco. Everything comes my way, you see. A little patience and the beautiful ship is ours, for it surely is wreck, and I justly claim all wrecks on my islands. There will be rum aboard, or at least plenty of liquors and wines. Champagne, perhaps. You shall have all the spirits for your drink if you back me up firmly in my demands."

"What will you do, señor?"

"Insist on taking possession of the ship, which, according to my law, is mine," he answered, with

grim humor. "Perhaps they may object, in which case you will stand by your chief. But understand: you must use no knives or pistols; I can't afford to have murder added to the charges against me. If diplomacy fails, we will fight with our bare fists, in American fashion, and our numbers will suffice to conquer those insolent strangers who come here uninvited and then refuse to abide by my laws."

He took from his pocket a note-book and with a fountain pen wrote upon one of the leaves as follows:

"To my beloved Friends, the Americaños:

"Alas, your ship is hopeless wreck. I, the lord and ruler of these islands, behold the sad condition and with grief, for I must condemn the ship as wreck, which I do by right of Spanish Grant to me, from which is no appeal. With pain for your loss, I am obligated to confiscate the ship that before was yours, with all it contains, and to declare it is now mine. I demand that you deliver my property into my hands at once, in the name of law and justice, and I believe you will do so, because otherwise you will become the enemies of the kingdom of

"Don Miguel del Borgitis, Rex."

He tore out this leaf, folded it neatly and then boldly ran his launch to the side of the yacht. Francisco stuck the paper on the point of a boat-hook and standing on a seat thrust the epistle so far up the side that Captain Krell was able to lean over and grasp it. Then the launch returned to its former position, while the captain carried the note to Madeline.

She read it aloud and their anxiety did not prevent the Americans from laughing heartily at the preposterous claim of this audacious Mexican refugee.

"At the same time," said Miss Dentry, resuming her gravity, "our case appears to be somewhat serious. The man has unmasked and shown us clearly his intentions. He believes we can expect no succor from outside, and in that he is quite correct. Only by our own efforts and the exercise of our wits may we hope to circumvent his intentions and retain our freedom and our property."

CHAPTER XX

BESIEGED

Disregarding the lordly disposal of the yacht and its contents so coolly outlined by Señor Ramon Ganza, those aboard the *Salvador* began to face the probability of a siege. They all gathered aft, where, shielded by the bulwarks from the view of the Mexicans, they could converse at leisure and with safety. At Madeline's suggestion, every member of the crew, seven in number, was present while the details of their visit to the larger island were related by his principals. The character of the lordly islander, and his history as gleaned from Pietro and Chica, were likewise canvassed, and his evident intention to add the strangers to his band of cowed subjects was impressed upon the entire company in a most forcible manner.

"It would have been serious, indeed," continued Madeline, "had Ganza arrived here before us and found you unwarned and unarmed, for you could not have resisted his invasion. But his clever scheme was frustrated by an accident to the

engines of his launch, and now we must bend our every energy to driving him away and making our escape from this dreadful island."

"We don't know yet, of course, how that can be done," added Mr. Radley-Todd, reflectively; "but there's no hurry about deciding it. We are pretty well provisioned for a siege, and Steve and I captured from the enemy and brought with us nine rifles, half a dozen revolvers, and some ammunition."

"We have also a small supply of arms and ammunition in the storeroom of the yacht," said Captain Krell. "The former owner was something of a sportsman, and I think you will find the guns to be shotguns."

"All the better," said Chesty. "These fellows may decide to board us, in which case the shotguns, at short range, will scatter their loads and do fearful execution. Get 'em up, Captain. Let's have on deck, where it's handy, every offensive and defensive weapon aboard."

"I don't want any shooting," protested Madeline; "I'd rather give them the yacht."

"We won't need to shoot," returned Steve. "A big bluff is all that is necessary."

The entire company now understood the importance of a successful resistance, and aside from the fact that Mrs. Tupper had violent hysterics,

which lasted several hours and nearly caused her devoted husband to jump overboard, the situation was accepted by all with philosophical composure. A definite plan to guard the deck and prevent the foe from scaling the sides was adopted and each man given his position and instructed what to do.

As they were dealing with a desperate and unscrupulous man, a self-constituted autocrat in this practically unknown group of islands, they realized the wisdom of being constantly alert; so all the men, passengers and crew alike, were divided into watches during every hour of day and night, and those not on duty slept in their clothing that they might respond instantly to any call to action.

The Mexican, however, proceeded very deliberately with the siege, believing his victims were trapped and unable to escape him. He withdrew for a time around the rocky point, where he disembarked ten of his fourteen men. With the other four he ran the launch to the mouth of the bay again and dropped anchor, evidently intending to block any egress by the boats of the yacht.

That night, under cover of the darkness, for the moon was often obscured by shifting clouds, Ramon's men deployed among the rocks on both sides of the narrow channel, where they erected two miniature forts, or lookouts, by piling up the

loose rocks. Behind each rock barrier some of the men were stationed, with instructions to watch every movement on the deck of the *Salvador* and report to their master. The Mexicans were well protected by the rocks from the firearms of those on board, if the defenders resorted to their use, and because of the slant of the deck from fore to aft Ramon could himself command almost the entire deck as he sat in his launch.

Realizing this disadvantage, Radley-Todd and O'Reilly, the engineer, crept down to the stern and by pushing the ends of their rifles through the hawser-holes were able to bring the launch under such direct fire that the outlaw decided that discretion was the better part of valor and withdrew his boat to a safer anchorage around the point, where he might still intercept the passage of any boat that ventured to come out.

The next morning Francisco of the one eye and a comrade took the launch back to the other island for a store of provisions. When they returned, at noon, they brought the two men who had been left behind when the first expedition set out, and also one of the rowboats, which was allowed to trail behind the launch.

With the Americans surrounded and on the defensive Ramon felt that he could safely remove his entire force from his home island and leave

the place to the keeping of the women. If it came to a fight he would need every man he had.

On that first day those on the yacht were alert and excited, but the marked composure on the part of their besiegers gradually quieted their fears of immediate violence. The decks were not really dangerous, although constantly under the observation of the men in the rock fortresses, so they ventured to use them freely. At one time, when Chesty Todd made a feint of landing on the shore, a group of Mexicans quickly gathered to prevent his leaving the ship, thus demonstrating their open enmity.

"This won't do!" declared Steve, savagely, as he faced the company assembled around the cabin table that evening. "Those infernal bandits mean to keep us here till doomsday—or until we go crazy and surrender. They'll make our lives miserable unless we dislodge them from those rocks."

"I prefer them there to having them attempt to scale the sides of our ship," returned Chesty. "A hand-to-hand fight would be far more serious."

"Interesting, isn't it?" said Mr. Cumberford.

"I don't think they care for a hand-to-hand fight," observed the captain. "Such fellows as this Ramon Ganza are always cowards."

"I don't know about that," said Madeline. "He has faced all the men he brought here and in spite

of their numbers and their hatred of him has cowed them, every one, single-handed."

"Ramon is not a coward," the child Chica declared very positively. "He is bad; yes. But not a coward."

"He has sixteen men—with himself, seventeen—and we have but eleven," said Steve. "However, the advantage is with us, because the yacht is a fort."

"You spoke a moment ago of dislodging them," remarked Radley-Todd. "Can't we manage to do that, Steve?"

"How?"

"If we could make some bombs," suggested the press-agent, slowly, "and hurl them among those rocks, I've an idea we could drive them away."

Steve was thoughtful a moment.

"We'd need nitro-glycerine for that," said he. "I suppose there's none aboard, Captain Krell?"

The captain shook his head.

"Plenty nitro-glycerine at big islan'," announced Pietro. "Ramon use it to blast rock."

"Ah, but that's a good way off," declared Steve.

Chesty drummed on the table, musingly.

"If Pietro will go with me," he said presently, "I'll get you the nitro-glycerine."

"You're crazy, man!"

"Not quite," said Chesty, with a smile. "Every

man belonging to Ramon's band is now here. I'm not afraid of the women he has left back there."

"But how will you get there—swim?"

"We'll take the launch, Pietro and I, and run the blockade at dead of night."

"No," said Madeline, with decision, "I can't allow that. It would be too dangerous an undertaking. You might be captured."

"I don't think so. If we are discovered, your launch can outrun theirs and I'll lead them a merry chase and come back again. What do you say, Pietro?"

"Who? Me, Señor? Why, Ramon my enemy now. So I go with you."

"You needn't fear Ramon, Pietro," said Madeline, gently. "We shall manage in some way to get you safely back to Mexico."

The man's expression was stolid and unbelieving.

"Perhaps he doesn't dare go back to Mexico," said Sybil.

"Oh, yes;" replied Pietro. "I not 'fraid of Mexico. I smuggle, sometimes, before Ramon get me; but they forget all that by now. It is Ramon I fear. He is very bad man, as little Chica say. Always he wins, never he loses, in what he tries to do. For me, I have disobey an' defy him, so

Ramon he whip me sure, when he catch me, an' when Ramon whip it is as bad as to die."

It was impossible to overcome this stubborn belief in Ramon's omnipotence and they did not argue with the man further. But Orissa, who had been thoughtfully listening to the conversation, now said:

"I do not like the plan of bringing nitro-glycerine here, even if Chesty could succeed in getting it. The stuff would be dangerous to us and to our enemies, for a slight accident would explode it or careless handling might blow us all to eternity. But, admitting you made the bombs, without accident to any of our party, what would be the result of exploding them among those little rock forts yonder? Wouldn't the rocks scatter in every direction and bombard us and the ship, perhaps causing damage that would be fatal to our hopes of escape?"

"Orissa is quite right," said Mr. Cumberford, decisively. "We must abandon the idea at once."

"I know it appears a desperate measure," admitted Radley-Todd, "but something must be done, both to drive away our enemies and get the *Salvador* afloat again. Cut the explosives, and what remains for us to do?"

"Make a sortie and drive them away from here," replied Cumberford. "I'm a little old for

a pitched battle or guerrilla warfare, but this extraordinary Mexican—er—er—interests me. I'm willing to have it out with him here and now."

"One white man is worth six Mexicans," declared Captain Krell, belligerently.

"Won't do at all," asserted Steve. "We can't afford to take the chances of defeat, gentlemen, while we have these girls in our care. The ship is a fort that is almost impregnable, and we mustn't leave it for an instant—under any circumstances."

CHAPTER XXI

CAPTURING AN AEROPLANE

As they sat with downcast countenances, reflecting upon their uncomfortable position, Orissa said quietly:

"I've thought of something to relieve us. The idea came to me when Chesty insisted our launch could run the blockade."

"Speak out, Ris," exclaimed Steve. "Your ideas are pretty good ones, as a rule. What's the proposition?"

"Why, we all seem to have forgotten the Hy."

"The Hydro-Aircraft?"

"Yes. It is lying quite safe, and in apple-pie order, in the little ravine at the foot of the bluff where we camped."

"But it is minus its plane-cloths," added Sybil. "Our tent is still standing, for I saw it from deck only an hour ago."

"It won't take long to attach the plane-cloths," said Steve, "provided those brigands will let us do it. It's rather odd they haven't taken the

trouble to capture the Aircraft already. It would be easy for Ramon to declare it 'wreck.' "

"What would be the use?" asked Madeline. "They could not fly it, even if they knew how to put it in order; and, as they imagine we cannot get to it, they are not worrying about the thing. Of course they are able to see that tent on the bluff as easily as we can, and by and by they will go there and capture whatever the girls left."

"True. That is why we must lose no unnecessary time," observed Orissa.

"I do not yet see what the proposition is," asserted Chesty, in a puzzled tone.

"I know what Orissa means," returned Steve quickly. "There's plenty of gasoline on board—I think nearly a barrel—intended for the use of the launch. If I could get to the Aircraft and fill its tanks with gasoline no one could prevent my flying home, where I could get a ship and men to come to our rescue."

"That interests me; it does, really!" said Mr. Cumberford. "It's so easy and practical I wonder none of us thought of it before."

"I've had the possibilities in mind for some time," declared Orissa, "but I had no idea we could get to the Aircraft until Chesty proposed running the blockade in our launch."

"It's a fine idea," said Chesty, with enthusi-

asm. "I mean both our ideas—the combination, Orissa."

"I believe it will solve all our difficulties," added Madeline, confidently. "But will not this journey be a hazardous one for Mr. Kane to undertake?"

"I think not," replied Orissa. "The same amount of gasoline that brought Sybil and me to this place will carry the machine back again, and Steve can go more directly than we came, for he knows exactly how to head."

"Then!" said Chesty Todd, "the plan is this: We'll put enough gasoline in cans to fill the tanks of the aëroplane, load 'em into the launch, and to-night Steve and I will sneak out of this inlet, slip past the Mexican's launch and hie us to that ravine of yours. Is there room enough for our boat to enter the bay you described, or is that big rock too close to shore to let us pass?"

"There will be just about room for you to pass in, I think," answered Orissa.

"But the big launch couldn't do it?"

"Ramon's? No, indeed."

"Very good."

"Who will fly with me to San Diego?" asked Steve. "The Aircraft carries two, you know. One of the women ought to go. I wish we could carry them all away from this dangerous place."

"Let them draw cuts for it," suggested Chesty.

"You can let me out," said Sybil; "I won't leave Daddy."

"Nonsense!" cried her father.

"Then I'm nonsensical," laughed Sybil, "for I won't budge an inch without you. That wicked Mexican might capture you in a jiffy if I wasn't here to look after you. Not a word, sir; the thing is settled, as far as I am concerned."

"I cannot go, of course," said Madeline. "This is my yacht and I must stand by it, and by my men, to the last. Nor could I with courtesy escape and leave my guests in danger."

"Then it shall be Mrs. Tupper," proposed Orissa.

"Me? Me? Goodness sakes, child," cried Mrs. Tupper, in great alarm, "do you think I'd risk my life in that dreadful airship?"

"You'll risk it by staying," suggested her husband.

"But there's a chance of salvation here," asserted the lady, with nervous haste. "I'd get light-headed and tumble out of that aëroplane in two minutes. And they'd hear me yell from Japan to San Francisco, I'd be so scared. I can stand death, Mr. Tupper, with Christian fortitude; but not torture!"

"Orissa?" said Steve, inquiringly.

"Yes; I'll go. I may be of more assistance to you all by going than by staying. And I will run the machine, Steve, and take you as a passenger. I've tinkered that steering-gear until I know just how to manage it."

Steve nodded.

"As I understand it, Miss Dentry," said he, "my mission will be to charter a fast steamship, for which Mr. Cumberford and I will pay, and bring it here to drag the *Salvador* off this beach. The crew, which I will see is well armed, will work in conjunction with yours and when we outnumber Ramon Ganza's band of rascals he will probably run away to his den without attempting to fight."

"Ramon never run," protested Pietro, shaking his head. "You cannot scare Ramon. The more men you bring, the more he has to fight; that is all."

This gloomy prophecy made them look grave for a time.

"Our Pietro is a pessimist," said Chesty, with assumed cheerfulness. "But some day the Mexican government will find this invincible hero and send a warship to blow his island out of the water."

"Why—yes!" exclaimed Madeline, with sudden inspiration; "the Mexican government is interested in this affair. Why not fly to the nearest

point on the Mexican coast, Mr. Kane, and from there telegraph President Madero? I believe he would send a warship at once, both to capture Ramon Ganza and to rescue us from his clutches."

"Um-m. Madero has his hands full, just now, putting down revolutions at home," Mr. Cumberford reminded her. "And maybe he isn't interested in Ganza, who was convicted of a felony under the régime of Diaz."

"I can try him, anyhow," said Steve. "The Mexican coast is about fifty miles nearer than San Diego."

"Madero has offer one thousan' dollar—Mexican—for capture of Ramon," said Pietro, proudly. "So much money shows Ramon is great man."

"In that case you'd better give Madero a chance at him, Steve," decided Mr. Cumberford. "A man-o'-war would be more effective here than a trading ship, and in the interests of humanity we should put an end to this fellow's cruel tyranny for good and all. He's far better off in jail."

After some further discussion this plan was finally decided on and preparations were begun for the adventure. During the afternoon the cans of gasoline were placed in the launch and Steve went over the machinery of the little boat with great care, to assure himself it was in perfect order.

The nights were never really dark until toward morning, when the stars seemed to dim and the moon dipped below the horizon. Sometimes there were a few drifting clouds, but they never obscured the sky long enough to be utilized as a mask. So Steve decided to make his attempt at the dark hour preceding dawn and made Orissa go to bed and get what sleep she could. She said her good-byes to the others then, so it would not be necessary to disturb them at the time of departure.

At three o'clock her brother called her and told her to get ready. Chesty and Steve were seated in the launch when the girl arrived on deck, and she quickly took her place. While it was much darker than it had been earlier in the night, Orissa found she could see near-by objects quite distinctly. Four of the crew, headed by Captain Krell, were standing by to lower the launch over the side, and as the owls were hooting their most dismal chorus their screams drowned any noise made by the windlass.

No sooner had the launch touched the surface than Chesty dipped his scull in the water and with a dexterous motion sent the little craft forward toward the mouth of the inlet. They might have been seen from the shore had the Mexicans been alert, but at this hour many who were sup-

posed to be watching had fallen asleep, and if any remained awake their eyes were not turned upon the waters of the tiny bay. Quite noiselessly the launch moved on and presently turned the point of rock at the right.

Orissa stifled a cry and Steve's heart gave a bound as the bow of the launch pointed straight at the big boat of Ramon, scarcely ten feet distant; but Chesty saw the danger, too, and a sharp swing of the scull sent the light craft spinning around so that it just grazed the side of the Mexican's boat, in which all the occupants were fast asleep.

Next moment they had passed it, and still Chesty continued sculling, as it was not safe as yet to start the engines. But when they had skirted the shore for such a distance that the screeching of the owls would be likely to drown the noise of their motor, Steve started the machinery and the launch darted away at full speed.

Half an hour later they crept between the big rock and the bluff and were safe in the deep hollow at the foot of the ravine, having accomplished the adventure so easily that they marvelled at their own success.

"Strikes me as a good omen," remarked Orissa, cheerfully, as they disembarked and drew the

launch upon the sands. "I hope the luck will follow you on your return, Chesty."

"Me?" replied the big boy. "Why, nothing ever happens to me. Let us hope the good luck will follow you and Steve, on whom the safety of the entire party now depends. What first, Steve?

"The tent. We must get that down before daybreak, so they won't see us working on it from the bay, and interfere with our proposed flight."

Orissa led the way to the bluff and at once Steve and Chesty began tumbling the rocks from the edges of the canvas. This was no light task, for the girls had erected a solid parapet in order to defy the wind; but just as the first streaks of dawn appeared the tent came down and they hastily seized the canvas, added it to the covering of the upper plane, which had been inside the tent, and lugged it all down the incline to where the frame of the Aircraft lay.

"Very good," said Steve. "We'll need the daylight now, in order to attach the cloth."

They had not long to wait, and while Steve, assisted by Radley-Todd, fastened the cloth in place with the clips provided for that purpose, which Orissa had carefully saved, the girl herself inspected the machinery and all the framework, even to the last brace, to be sure it was in condition for the long trip. She also oiled the steering

gear and thoroughly tested it to see that it worked freely.

By nine o'clock the planes were tautly spread and the tanks had been filled with gasoline.

"I think we are all ready for the start," said Steve. "But how about you, Chesty? As soon as we roll the Aircraft to the top of the bluff the Mexicans will see us and start for this place to try to intercept us. Orissa and I will be gone, when they arrive; but they may find you, unless you make tracks."

"How do you expect to regain the ship?" asked Orissa, who had not considered this matter before.

"Don't worry about me, I beg of you," retorted the boy, hastily. "I shall be all right. All ready, Steve?"

Steve looked at him thoughtfully.

"I think that when they see us fly away they may give up the idea of coming here," said he; "and, in that case, you'd better lie here in the ravine until night, when you can try to steal back in the same way we came."

"All right, old man; never mind me."

"But we *do* mind you, Chesty," said Orissa, earnestly. "You've been a faithful friend ever since we got into this difficulty—and before, too—so we can't have anything happen to you."

He blushed like a girl, but declared he would be perfectly safe.

"Don't take any foolish chances," urged Orissa.

"I won't."

They rolled the Aircraft up to the top of the bluff and set it with the head facing the sea. Then Steve and Orissa took their places and Chesty, giving them each a hearty handclasp, spun the propeller blade as Steve started the engine.

At once the aëroplane darted forward, rose as it passed the bluff, and sailed gracefully into the air. Chesty hid his six-feet-three behind a boulder, to shield himself from observation, while he watched the splendid machine turn upon its course and speed away over the Pacific on its errand of rescue.

Then, with a sigh of relief and elation, the boy crept into the ravine and descended to where his boat lay. Seated in the launch, calmly awaiting him, were three of the Mexicans, headed by the one-eyed Francisco.

CHAPTER XXII

RAMON GANZA

When Madeline came on deck, soon after daybreak, Captain Krell reported the successful departure of the launch.

"Are you sure they were not seen?" she asked.

"Quite sure, Miss Dentry, for we heard not a sound, either from our party or from the besiegers, although we listened intently."

Long before Steve could have prepared the aëroplane for the journey those on board the yacht were gazing expectantly at the bluff. The tent had disappeared, which was proof that the undertaking had so far been successful.

At this time there seemed to be a little stir among the Mexicans and Mr. Cumberford suggested, rather nervously, that they also had noticed the absence of the tent, without understanding what could have become of it.

At half-past eight they heard the sound of the engines of Ramon's big launch, and that made them worry more than ever until Sybil suddenly cried: "There they are!"

Upon the distant bluff appeared the Aircraft. A little cheer, which none could restrain, went up from the deck of the yacht. There was no delay. Scarcely was the machine in position when it mounted into the air and headed directly toward the east. Every eye watched it eagerly until it had become a dim speck against the blue sky and finally disappeared from view altogether, flying steadily and with a speed that raised their hopes to the highest pitch. Then, with one accord, they returned to the cabin to discuss the chances of Radley-Todd's getting back to them safely with the launch.

"I don't worry much about that young man," said Cumberford. "He's as full of resources as a pincushion is of sawdust, and I'll bet my hat we shall soon see him again, safe and sound."

The captain now entered with an anxious face.

"That confounded Mexican king is signaling us with a flag of truce," he reported.

"What, Ramon?" exclaimed Madeline.

"Yes. What shall we do?"

"Stay here, Miss Dentry," said Cumberford, rising. "I'll go and see what the fellow wants."

"I will go with you," returned Madeline, quietly.

"I wish you would not."

"Why?" she asked. "If he bears a flag of truce there is no danger."

"I do not believe he would respect a flag of truce—nor anything else," asserted Mr. Cumberford. "Do you, Captain?"

"No, sir. He's tricky and unreliable. Don't trust him for a moment."

But Madeline would not be denied. She accompanied the captain and Mr. Cumberford to the deck.

Just beside the yacht floated the little rowboat which had been brought from Ramon's island, and in it sat Ramon himself, all alone, holding aloft a handkerchief attached as a flag to a boat-hook.

As they peered over the side at him he bowed profoundly and removed his hat to Miss Dentry. He was still clothed in his white flannels and his fingers glittered with jewels.

"What do you want?" demanded Mr. Cumberford sharply.

"The pleasure of conversing with you, señor," was the confident reply. "If you will kindly let down your ladder I will come on board. You see, myself I place in your power. We have, I much regret, some slight misunderstanding between us, which a few words will assuredly correct."

"Don't let him up, sir," advised Captain Krell, in a low voice.

"But he is unarmed," said Madeline. "I think it will be best to confer with him."

"Then do it from a distance," grumbled the captain.

"Sir," called Mr. Cumberford, "if you have any apologies to make, you may speak from where you are."

"Then, alas, my overtures of peace are refused?" said Ramon, not defiantly, but in a tone of deep regret.

"No; we don't refuse any sincere overtures of peace; but you have treated us in a scoundrelly manner, and we don't trust you."

"Such a terrible mistake, señor; so sad! But I cannot explain it from here. With utmost trust in your honor I offer to come to you alone, and—see!—unarmed. Will not you, for the sake of the ladies who are with you, encourage my friendliness?"

"Let him come up," said Madeline again. There seemed a veiled threat in Ramon's appeal.

"Very well. But tell your men to watch his every movement, Captain, and if he makes a treacherous move shoot him down without hesitation."

The rope ladder was cast over the side and

Ramon promptly seized it and climbed to the deck.

"Follow us below," commanded Mr. Cumberford, turning toward the cabin. The man hesitated, casting a shrewd, quick glance around. Then he bowed again and said:

"I thank the señor for his courtesy."

In the cabin were assembled Mr. and Mrs. Tupper and Sybil Cumberford. Chica and Pietro discreetly kept out of view. Mr. Cumberford entered first, followed by Madeline. Then came Ramon Ganza and behind him the captain and little O'Reilly, the Irish engineer. This last personage was virtually "armed to the teeth," for he carried one of Ramon's own rifles and a brace of revolvers.

"Be seated," said Mr. Cumberford, pointing to a chair. "And now, sir, state your errand."

Ganza's comprehensive glance had taken in every member of the party, as well as the luxurious furnishings of the *Salvador's* cabin, which seemed to please his aesthetic taste.

"I ask to be inform, being in ignorance, if three people may ride in one flying-machine," he blandly announced, looking from one face to another as if uncertain whom to address.

"Three?" asked Cumberford, as if puzzled.

"Yes. I see that one young lady and two men are missing from your party."

"I suppose three can ride, if need be," muttered Cumberford. "Is your mission here to gain information concerning aëroplanes?"

"Only in part, señor."

The Mexican's features had hitherto been composed and smiling, despite the stern and mistrustful looks he encountered on all sides. But now, perhaps understanding that these Americans were not easily to be cajoled, his own face grew somber and lowering and he said in a sharp, incisive manner: "You prefer to discuss business only?"

"We do, sir," was the reply, Mr. Cumberford continuing to act as spokesman.

"Very nice. I have a wish to invite you all to my island, where you shall be my respected guests. My mansion shall be at your service; my servants shall obey your commands; you shall delight in the grand scenery and enjoy yourselves as you will."

"Thank you; we decline your hospitality."

"But I fear in that you make bad mistake, señor," continued Ramon Ganza, unabashed by the rebuff. "My island is a pleasant place, and where else can you find so much happiness when my ship, which you now inhabit, is destroyed?"

"Oh; that's the idea, is it?" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford. "You interest me, sir; you do, really. Perhaps you will state how you intend to destroy our ship, which is not, permit me to say, your ship as yet."

"Is it necessary to say more?" asked the Mexican, spreading out his jewelled hands with a deprecating gesture.

"I think it will enable us to understand you better."

As if in deep thought, Ganza drummed upon the cabin table with his fingers.

"I am very sad at your refusal to be my guests," he said after a time. "This, my ship, is in a most dangerous position. It is half out of water, on an island that is a bleak rock. I come here from the island where I reside to befriend you—to offer you my humble hospitality—when I have taken possession of the wreck—and in your blindness—do you call it fatuity?—you receive me as an enemy. Some of your people chase my boat, as if I have no right to sail the seas of my own islands! Yet I am not resentful; not at all. I enjoy some humor and I am good man, with much respectability. When your ship catches on fire, as it will probably do very soon, you must escape to these bare rocks, where you can find no assistance, no food to keep you alive. Then per-

haps you will feel more kindly toward poor Don Miguel del Borgitis—your humble servant—and find willingness to accept his beautiful home as your own. But why wait for fire to drive you to death most terrible or to my great hospitality? Is it not the best to accept my offer, and so save yourselves from—inconvenience?"

Beneath the smooth words the ugly threat was so visible that even brave Madeline paled, and Mr. Tupper shuddered vigorously. But Mr. Cumberford, gazing critically into the man's face, replied:

"I see. Interesting; very. You want to save this yacht. You would like to drag it afloat and carry it away to your own island, where we, accepting your hospitality, would become your prisoners. But if we refuse to surrender the ship, you say you will set fire to it, in which case you would burn us up or force us to land. If we land, you will capture us and force us to become your unwilling subjects. Is that a clear understanding of your statement, Ramon Ganza?"

The outlaw gave a start as he heard his true name mentioned, but quickly recovered his assurance.

"The señor is very intelligent," he said.

"At any rate, the señor is not demented," retorted Cumberford, grimly. "Why did you

venture to place yourself in our power, Ramon Ganza, and then threaten us as you have done?"

"I came under flag of truce."

"And you think, on that account, we will let you go again, to carry out your cowardly designs?"

"I am certain of that. Before I came I took care to protect myself."

"In what way?"

He looked at his watch, a huge jewelled affair.

"Underneath your ship," said he quietly, "is anchored a mine of very much power. It lies under that part which is in the water—I think just below the place where we now sit. If I do not depart from here in safety within fifty minutes from now, my men will kindly explode this mine and blow us all to—well, where we go. The poor ship, alas, will be destroyed with us."

"Would your men execute such an absurd order?" asked Cumberford sneeringly.

"With much satisfaction. You see, it would make them free. They do not love me very much. If I die, they will have my beloved island and all my possessions—so they think."

"And you would be willing to forfeit your life as the alternative of not getting control of this yacht? Do you expect us to believe that?"

The outlaw's glittering fingers drummed upon the table again.

"The señor is not so wholly intelligent as I believed," said he. "I do not contradict his statement that he is not—eh—what you call it?—demented, or a fool; but the statement seems open to suspicion."

"Ah; that interests me."

"It ought to. You seem to know my name, señor; therefore you doubtless know my history. Pietro will have told you, or Chica, for both are now with you. My safety has depended on my keeping hidden upon my island. I must not let any who has seen me there, and recognized Ramon Ganza, depart to carry the tale to the mainland. In Mexico a price is set upon my head and they have condemned me to years in prison. But—there! I assure you all that I am good man, and honest; but my enemies have conspired to destroy me.

"As Don Miguel del Borgitis I have lived very respectable until, unfortunately for us all, you came here. I knew two girls had been wreck on this island in a flying-machine—a very strange and exciting invention, is it not?—but I did not disturb them nor allow them to become aware of my existence. Why? All I wish is safety. When some of you people, after this yacht is driven

ashore in storm, intrude on me by coming to my hiding-place, I was obliged to protect myself. I started to come here to get every one on board and invite them to my island—where I meant to keep you all indefinitely, for I did not dare allow you to return to America and say where you had found Ramon Ganza. This yacht I could use to advantage, I admit; but I would be better pleased had I never seen it—nor you.

"Almost at once you are my enemies, and defy my laws. That did not change my plans except to make them harder. In this unknown island I am really king. I must conquer you, which I thought with good reason I could easily accomplish in time. So I make siege to your boat, laughing to think you cannot escape me. But one man cannot comprehend all things, señor, and I failed to consider that devilish contrivance, your flying-machine. I thought it was wreck, and no good any more. Some time last night three of your party get away and go to flying-machine, and this morning some of them—one, two, three; it does not matter—have fly away in it. Of course they will go to the mainland. That means they send assistance to you. They float your ship, take you back to America and you all have knowledge where Ramon Ganza may be found by those that seek his capture. Now you understand me,

do you not? You have make it very unpleasant for me. If I escape from my island in little boat, where can I go? If I stay I will be arrest and carried to Mexico to be put in prison. Very well; I must escape. But not in my launch, which is old and not very good. I must have this yacht, which will carry me to any far part of the world, where Mexico is not known. Perhaps in it I could be privateer, if that seemed best way to protect my liberty—which is dearer to me than life. With this yacht I could defy all enemies; without it—I face death, or at least ruin. You have driven me to this desperation, so I come to make you my proposition. Now that I have explained all with much frankness, you will understand I mean what I say, for I am talking for my liberty—the liberty of a man who would soon die in confinement, for I am used to the open and could not exist as a convicted felon, in chains and abused by dogs of jailers. For your party I have no especial enmity; neither do I care for you the snap of my fingers. But believe this: Either I will save myself in this yacht, as I have proposed, or I will die in your company."

CHAPTER XXIII

A DESPERATE ALTERNATIVE

Ramon Ganza had spoken slowly and with deliberation, choosing his words with care. His story seemed plausible, except where it referred to the planting of the mine, which he claimed to be the last resort of a man so desperately situated. Some of his hearers were quite convinced of his sincerity in making this statement, but Mr. Cumberford was not among them. He remembered Chica's artless statement: "Ramon lies; he always lies," and it confirmed his skepticism.

"As I understand you," he made answer, after a little thought, "you consider your retreat no longer safe because we have discovered it. Therefore, on obtaining possession of this yacht, you propose to sail to parts unknown, leaving us stranded on this rocky island."

"From whence you will soon be rescued," added the outlaw, with a bow.

"The siege which you had planned, in order to force us to surrender through starvation, is no longer practical; for time presses and if you delay

you will be surprised by the ship sent to rescue us—perhaps a Mexican man-o'-war."

The man nodded, watching the speaker's face with an eagerness he could not dissemble.

"For which reason," continued Mr. Cumberford, "you decided to force a climax by coming on board and threatening us—as you have done. Well, we intend to force your alternative, Ramon Ganza. You are our prisoner, and if your men blow up this yacht you shall go to eternity with us!"

The Mexican's face grew rigid a moment. Then he smiled in a sardonic way and shrugged his shoulders. But Mr. Tupper, white and trembling as with an ague, leaped to his feet and cried:

"In heaven's name, Cumberford, what do you mean? Would you destroy us all in this heartless fashion?"

"No. There is no mine; or, if there is, it will not explode."

"I—I differ with you. This—er—person—is desperate. He—he knows what he's talking about. I refuse to ta-ta-take the chances, sir! I must consider the safety of my wife and myself, and of our niece, Miss Dentry. This is our yacht, Cumberford, not yours, I beg to remind you, and we shall decide this important question ourselves."

Even before he ceased speaking Mrs. Tupper, whose eyes had been wild and staring, uttered a piercing shriek and tumbled to the floor of the cabin in violent hysterics. Sybil and Madeline rushed to her assistance and this confusion further unnerved Mr. Tupper. With sudden energy he pounded his fist upon the table and cried:

"I won't allow it! I won't allow this sacrifice. Madeline is rich; what does she care for this miserable yacht? Take it, you Mexican thief, if you want it! Our lives are far too precious to be put in peril."

Ramon Ganza's face showed his satisfaction but his eyes expressed nothing but contempt for the terrified Mr. Tupper. Mr. Cumberford sat calmly regarding the contortions of the afflicted lady, as if wondering how much was involuntary and how much pure perversity. The captain twirled his thumbs and seemed absolutely unconcerned, while little O'Reilly's attention was fixed, in keen amusement, on the scene before him, as if it were a vaudeville act performed for his especial edification.

As Mrs. Tupper continued to pound the floor with her heels Madeline first emptied the water pitcher over her aunt and then slyly pinched her, which torture may have been responsible for some of the frantic screams. Mr. Tupper bowed his

head despairingly on the cabin table, in an attitude so pitiable that it should have aroused the sympathy of all beholders, as he intended it to do. But meanwhile his good wife gradually recovered; her screams subsided to heart-rending wails and then to moans, after which she became quiet except for a series of nervous sobs. Madeline and Sybil now raised the poor woman and supported her to her stateroom, where she fell exhausted upon the berth.

It was not until the girls returned to the cabin that the discussion of Ramon Ganza's proposition was renewed. Miss Dentry gave him a searching look as she entered and noted the outlaw's smirk of satisfaction and the triumphant glitter of the dark eyes beneath their half closed lids. Then her own expression hardened and she turned to Mr. Cumberford, as if inviting him to proceed.

"Madeline," implored Mr. Tupper, "be good enough to assure this man—Mr.—Mr.—eh—Ganza—that the yacht, which is your property, is at his disposal in return for our—safety."

"The yacht is really Miss Dentry's property," added Mr. Cumberford coolly. "She will dispose of it as she thinks fit."

Madeline, seated at the table, studied the faces before her curiously, while an amused smile played around her lips. She knew she was enjoy-

Madeline, seated at the table, studied the faces before her curiously, while an amused smile played around her lips. "We cannot accept our enemy's proposition," she announced.

ing the scene, and also knew the moment was critical, but no fear of consequences caused her courageous heart to falter an instant.

"We cannot accept our enemy's proposition," she announced. "Ramon Ganza is not the man to abide by any promises he makes, and if once we left the protection of this yacht we would probably be treated with little mercy. It would not save a single life, Uncle Martin, to agree to Ganza's proposal. Threatening and browbeating those weaker than himself seems to be the man's pet recreation and before he left the island he would leave us to our fate, virtual prisoners. It might be years before any ship chanced to sail this way."

"I give you my pledge of honor to send word to your friends where you are," protested Ganza, eagerly.

"As you have no honor, sir, your word has no value. But I have a counter-proposition to suggest which will, I think, satisfy all concerned. Order your men, Ramon Ganza, to lay down their arms and surrender themselves to our keeping and to obey us unreservedly. Then, under command of Captain Krell, all hands must attempt to get the yacht afloat in deep water. When that is accomplished we will take you with us back to the United States and secretly land you in any

port you select. Afterward we will not betray you nor attempt to hunt you down. If you need money, I will even supply you with a small sum that will enable you to flee to Europe or South America. That is fair. It is more fair than you deserve. But, if you accept our terms, we will abide by them faithfully."

The Mexican was intensely annoyed.

"No!" he exclaimed, abruptly. "If you cannot trust me, why should I trust you?"

"Because my plan is by far the better way," she rejoined. "If you seek liberty, if you desire to avoid arrest, this plan will surely accomplish your purpose. You cannot prefer prison to assured freedom, and the alternative, if you reject my plan, is simply to explode your mine."

He drummed on the table again, rather nervously.

"Pardon me, Miss Dentry," said Cumberford, "but you are proposing to aid and abet the escape of a condemned criminal. You will render yourself, and us, liable to punishment."

"I know," she answered. "I despise myself for treating with this scoundrel, but do it to relieve the fears of the Tuppers and perhaps others aboard who have not yet protested. If I dared follow my own counsel I would defy him, as you have done."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Tupper, looking at the Mexican beseechingly, "accept Miss Dentry's terms, I implore you. She will do exactly as she agrees; she always does!"

"Puh!" muttered Ganza, uneasily shifting in his chair; "perhaps we can arrange. But the trust shall not be all on one side. If I trust you, you must trust me—to an extent—a few more details. Instead of giving you my men, you must give me yours, and place all weapons in my control. Also I will take command of this yacht, for I am good sailor. In an hour's time I will float the ship; then, with my men, I will sail it back to United States, to land your party on the coast near to some city which you can reach easily by walking. After that I will sail away in this yacht, which you will present to me in return for my services to you. You see, in this way you assure absolute safety to yourselves. As this wise and agreeable gentleman," indicating Mr. Tupper, "has with cleverness stated, the young lady is rich enough to afford the loss of her boat, so you can have no objection to my generous proposition."

"None whatever!" exclaimed Mr. Tupper. "Agree, Madeline, agree!"

"No," she said, shaking her head, "I will not.

The man is not sincere, or he would not require us to place ourselves in his power."

"But I insist, my dear. He—he seems quite honest. I—I——"

"Be quiet, confound you!" roared Cumberford, losing patience. "You're a doddering old idiot, Tupper, and if you don't shut up I'll gag you." He turned to Ganza. "Miss Dentry's proposition still stands, and it's the final word. You'll either accept it—right now, on the spot—or take the consequences."

"Already I have refuse," said the outlaw calmly.

"Very well. O'Reilly, march this fellow to the cage, for'ard, and lock him in. Then stand guard before the door and shoot him if he bothers you."

"Thank 'e, sor; it's proud I am to do that same," answered the engineer, gleefully.

"One moment, please," said Ganza. "You make doubt of my saying that you all face a most horrible death. You are stupid Americans, and must be convinced. Come with me on deck and I will prove to you your danger."

"No harm in that," replied Cumberford. "It's on your way to the cage."

With one accord they all accompanied O'Reilly and his prisoner to the deck.

"Now," said Ramon, standing by the rail, "I

have some men hid in those rocks yonder. Their names are Paschal, Mateo, Gabrielle, Gomez, Francisco, Pedro, Gonzales, Juan and Tomas. Tell me which one I shall call—I care not which, myself—and the man will assure you my orders are positive to them, and that they will carry out the explosion of the mine as I have arranged, provided I do not return in safety."

Cumberford was curious to learn the extent of the rogue's bravado.

"Call Mateo," he suggested.

The Mexican did so, raising his voice to utter the summons.

From behind a pile of rocks nearly opposite them sprang a thin, gaunt man. He ran down to the water's edge, saluted his chief and stood at attention.

"Come here, Mateo," commanded Ganza.

Without hesitation the man waded into the inlet and swam to the rope ladder which dangled over the side. This he seized and climbed on deck, where, dripping with water, he again faced his master and saluted him.

"Tell me, Mateo," said Ramon Ganza, "where is it, beneath this boat, that the mine has been planted?"

"Fourteen feet from the stern, Capitan."

"And is it powerful enough to destroy the ship?"

"To make it in small pieces, Capitan—an' ten ship like it, if ten ship were here."

"Very nice. You know what time the mine is to explode?"

"At eleven o'clock, Capitan, unless you come ashore to countermand the order."

"Ah yes; so it is. You may go back to your post, Mateo."

The man, looking neither to right nor left, descended the ladder, swam to shore and retreated behind the rocks again.

Ramon turned to Mr. Cumberford, showing the open face of his watch.

"In five minutes it will be eleven o'clock," he quietly announced.

"Take him to the cage, O'Reilly!"

Two other armed men had joined the engineer on deck and the three now surrounded Ganza and started forward with him.

"Mercy, Cumberford! Save us—save us!" howled Mr. Tupper, frantic with fear. "I can't die now—we ought none of us to die! Give him the launch. Give him the——"

A cry interrupted him. Mason, the man nearest the rail, dropped his gun and staggered back with his hands clasped to his side, from which a

stream of blood gushed forth. At the same moment the huge form of Ramon Ganza leaped the rail and dove headforemost into the water.

But everyone else was more interested in the wounded man, who seemed to be badly hurt. Ramon Ganza was forgotten as the girls bent over the poor fellow with anxious looks.

"Have Mason brought to my own cabin, at once," said Madeline to Captain Krell.

They carried the wounded man below, to be placed in Madeline's roomy cabin. Mr. Cumberford was not a surgeon, but there was no one aboard who knew more of surgery than he and so he went to Mason's side at once.

Ganza had struck the man with a knife of the stiletto type, the narrow blade of which had penetrated his side just above the hip joint. Mr. Cumberford's "first aid" outfit, which the captain was able to supply, enabled him to stop the bleeding, but he was unable to tell how serious the injury might prove. The man was in considerable pain, which Cumberford partially relieved with a hypodermic injection of morphine.

During this interesting period no one gave a thought to the escaped Mexican, but when nothing more could be done for his patient Cumberford left the girls to watch over him and walked into the cabin, where he found Mrs. Tupper sob-

bing as if in great grief while her husband sat in his favorite despairing attitude, his head bowed on his arms.

"What's wrong?" demanded Cumberford, in surprise.

"Wrong!" cried Tupper, lifting his head; "why, at any moment may come the crash of the explosion that will send us all to eternity. We—we can't escape it. It's inevitable!"

Cumberford looked at his watch.

"It's a quarter to twelve," he said. "The explosion was due at eleven."

"But the Mexican brigand—the pirate chief—the——"

"He has escaped, so there'll be no explosion at all. I believe he threatened to fire the ship; but he won't do that. Ganza's sole ambition is to capture this boat, so he can sail away from his countrymen, escape imprisonment, and perhaps become a really-truly pirate. Interesting, isn't it? Forget the explosion, Tupper; if you must worry, worry about our real danger."

"What is that, sir? What is our real danger?" cried Madeline's uncle, springing to his feet in a new access of terror.

"There'll be fighting, presently," predicted Mr. Cumberford. "Having failed in all else, the Mexican will find a way to board us—in the night,

probably—and will try to slice us to goulash or pepper us with bullets, as opportunity decides."

"Great heavens!"

"To be sure. To avoid getting to those great heavens, where you don't belong, I advise you to arm yourself properly and be ready to repel the attack."

Then Cumberford went on deck and found the captain.

"How about Ramon Ganza?" he asked.

"I think Ganza kept swimming and reached the shore, where his men dragged him to cover. The fellow seems to bear a charmed life."

"That's bad," observed Cumberford, shaking his head regretfully. "I've an idea, Captain Krell, that unless we manage to capture Ramon Ganza during the next twenty-four hours, he will manage to capture us."

"So soon?" asked the captain.

"He won't dare to wait longer. There's help coming."

"Well, sir, in that case——" The captain hesitated.

"In that case it will be pleasanter and more satisfactory for us to capture Ganza," said Mr. Cumberford. "Interesting; isn't it?"

"How can we do it?" asked Captain Krell.

"I don't know," replied Cumberford.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DIPLOMACY OF CHESTY TODD

When Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd discovered the one-eyed Francisco and his two comrades calmly seated in the *Salvador's* launch, engaged in nonchalantly smoking their brown-paper cigarettes, he merely raised his eyebrows and continued down the slope. They had seen him as soon as he saw them and, confident in their superior numbers, awaited his advance with serenity.

Chesty knew there was little chance of escape, and he knew the men knew he knew it. The launch was his sole resource, and the enemy had captured it. He might, perhaps, dodge behind the rocks on the mountain for an indefinite period, but they'd get him in the end, so such an undertaking was scarcely worth the exertion it required.

Therefore, on he came, walking leisurely and picking his way deliberately down the incline until he stood beside the launch, which was still beached upon the shore of the little pocket-like bay. Then he drew out a silver case and, choosing

a cigarette with solicitous care, turned to Francisco and said:

"Will the señor favor me with a light?"

The men grinned. They enjoyed the humor of the situation. Francisco, with a bow of mock deference, furnished the required light from his own cigarette.

Chesty climbed into the launch, took a seat facing Francisco and remarked: "Fine day, señors."

"Good to fly in air," nodded one of the men, with a laugh and a glance skyward.

"Oh; did you see the machine fly? Pretty sight, wasn't it? And you boys saw it for nothing. In the United States we charge fifty cents to tickle the vision like that."

Francisco looked at him, meditating.

"Where they go?" he asked.

"To Mexico, to ask President Madero for a battleship."

The men exchanged significant glances.

"For why, señor?" inquired one of them.

"To come and get Ramon Ganza and clap him in prison. Perhaps hang him to one of those banana trees, on the bluff up there."

The Mexicans locked their consternation.

"If that is true," said Francisco, slowly, "then I may be capture an' put in prison, too."

"I suppose so; because you belong to Ganza's gang and have probably broken the laws more than once."

"I not murder," protested the man. "Ramon do that, I know; but not me. I very hones' an' good. But come," he added, throwing away his cigarette and rising. "We mus' go back. You are our prisoner, señor."

Chesty did not move. He took the silver case from his pocket and offered it to the Mexicans.

"Help yourselves, boys," he said. "There's no hurry. Let us sit here and have a little talk. When you get back to Ramon he'll be sure to keep you busy enough. This is a good time to rest."

They hesitated a little, but took the cigarettes and lighted them.

"I suppose," remarked Mr. Todd, leaning back with his arms clasped around his knees, "if I asked the warship to take Ganza, and let my friends—you are my friends, I suppose?" They all nodded, watching his face eagerly. "And let my friends escape—with me, in our yacht, the *Salvador*—they would do so without question. Madero knows me, and he usually does what I ask."

"You know Madero?" asked Francisco, his back against the boat and his elbows resting on the gunwale, in a lounging attitude.

"We are like twin brothers," asserted Chesty. "That is why he will send a warship to take Ramon Ganza and all his gang—except those who are my friends."

They smoked a while in silence and Chesty noted that they now forbore meeting one another's eyes.

"Ramon great man," said one, presently, as if to himself. "Ramon bad master; his people are dogs; but Ramon have his own way, an' nobody dare stop him."

"Wrong, my friend," rejoined Mr. Todd. "Ramon is stopped right now. His time is up; his days are numbered. He has run the length of his rope. Presently he'll be confined in a dungeon, on bread-and-water, or breaking stone on the roads—in chains and very miserable. Poor Ramon. What a fool he was to break the law—which leads to breaking stones!"

"Ramon very clever," suggested another man, but in a doubtful tone.

"Cleverness has failed him this time," said Chesty. "Your leader is caught like a rat in a trap. If he could get hold of our yacht he'd skip out and save himself; but he can't do that in a thousand years."

"An' why not, señor?"

"We're too strong for him."

They pondered this.

"Ramon have sixteen men," said Francisco, presently. "You had 'leven; but one fly away, an' one—that is you, señor—is now capture. That make you nine. Nine to sixteen—an' Ramon to lead those sixteen!"

"You didn't remain in school long enough to complete your education, Francisco," declared the prisoner, calmly. "In other words, you can't figure. Here's the real situation, and it's worth your while to study it: The yacht has a crew of seven—all splendid warriors. Then there's General Cumberford, a terrible fighter, and Major-General Tupper, who cries every night if he can't kill a man before he goes to bed—it makes him sleep better, you know—and the invincible Captain Krell, who once cut down a whole regiment with his own saber—chopped them into mincemeat by the hundreds, and was given a gold medal with his monogram engraved on it, to commemorate the event. That's an even ten defenders. And then there's myself. I won't say much about myself, but you might look me over carefully. It is possible that if I was aroused I might crush you three in my arms until your bones cracked like walnuts."

They did look at him, and it seemed as if the

big fellow might do it, exactly as he said. But Chesty continued, reassuringly:

"However, I never injure my friends. I'm noted for that. Let's see; ten in our party, so far, wasn't it? Then there's that Red-beard—Pietro—who has been given a charm by one of our witch-women which will not only preserve his life but enable him to defeat all his enemies. Pietro desires to return to civilization, a free man, and we will allow him to do so."

They were much impressed by this statement. Chesty's idea of the "witch-woman" was destined to prove his most forceful argument.

"Pietro makes eleven," he continued, "and you three bring the number up to fourteen, which leaves Ramon but thirteen followers to be arrested with him—unlucky number, thirteen. Haven't you noticed it?"

"You think we join you, then?" asked Francisco, curiously.

"I'm sure of it. You are no longer afraid of Ramon, for his jig is up. You don't want to go to prison with him, because it is very disagreeable to break stone on the roads, I'm told, and in prison they deprive a man of even his cigarettes. I know you have been bad boys, all three of you, and until now the law has threatened you. But you have reformed. Remember, señors, you have reformed,

and are now honest men. I will tell Madero, my friend the president, what honest men you are, and how you have helped to defy Ramon, the outlaw, and give him up to justice. Madero will then reward you, and you will live happy ever after."

It was an enticing picture. The men looked grave and undecided. In their hearts they hated Ramon; but they also feared him. For years they had lived in daily terror of the tyrant who ruled them with an iron hand, who whipped a man brutally if he incurred his anger, who dominated them so utterly that they grovelled at his feet like the curs they were. If they could be sure of Ramon's downfall; if they could believe this big American boy, who was fully as powerful of frame as Ramon himself, then they would gladly desert the tyrant and save themselves by joining his enemies. It was only their inbred fear of Ramon and their confidence in his cleverness in defying justice, that made them hesitate.

Chesty saw this. He racked his brain to find other arguments.

"You have witch-women?" asked one of the men, in an awed tone.

"Three of them, all very bewitching."

"One has fly away."

"Yes; to cast a spell over the captain of the

Mexican battleship, and make him hurry. The two most powerful are still here on this island."

"Then why they not use their witchcraft to push your ship into deep water?" inquired Francisco, his one eye flashing triumphantly. "Why the witch-women let Ramon make trouble for you? Eh? Tell me, señor."

Chesty looked at the man reproachfully.

"How stupid you are, Francisco. Must we not keep Ramon busy, to hold him here until the warship comes? Why do you suppose we came to this island at all, and ran our ship high on the beach, without hurting it in any way? Did we lay a trap for Ramon? Did we coax him to come and try to capture us, that we might prove he is a wicked law-breaker? We do not seem much afraid of your Ramon, do we? Am I frightened? Do I grow pale, and tremble? Here—feel my pulse—does my blood beat faster in my veins because Ramon Ganza, the trapped criminal, is waiting here to be captured, and thinks he is making us worry?"

The two men exchanged a few sentences in Spanish. Francisco listened to them and nodded approvingly.

"The case is this, señor," he announced, addressing Mr. Todd. "We would like to leave Ramon. We would like to join your ship an' go

back to Mexico, an' have pardon. But Ramon is not trap yet. Ramon great man. Many time he escape. If we leave him, an' he then capture your ship, Ramon flog us with whip, which make great pain in us."

"True, that might be the result if Ramon captures the ship; but he can't do that—not in a century of Sundays, which is a long time. And if you stay with Ramon you will surely be made prisoners when the warship comes, which will be in another day or two. You must make up your minds which is the most powerful—we and our witch-women, with the Mexican government and its warships to back us, or poor Ramon, who is caught in a trap. I like you, all three—but not too much. You are fine men—unless I am lying—and I would grieve to see you imprisoned with Ramon. But otherwise I do not care what you decide to do. Come with me and I will save you, just as I intend to save myself, from Ramon's anger. But if you stick to your old master I cannot say one good word for you when you face the Mexican authorities. Now I am tired talking. Make up your minds and let me know."

He carelessly rose, lighted another cigarette and strolled down to the water's edge, where he stood with his back to them. The three rascals

took advantage of the opportunity and argued among themselves for half an hour.

"Señor!" called Francisco, who, as a trusted lieutenant of Ramon Ganza, was the more important of the three.

Mr. Radley-Todd came back to the launch.

"It is this way," explained Francisco. "We desire to be save, señor, but we have caution. We believe you speak true, but not yet have you conquer Ramon; not yet has the warship come to take him to prison. So we think of a way to be safe if Ramon win, an' safe if you win. It is but just to us, as honest men, that we do that way."

Chesty smiled, really amused.

"How childlike and bland you naughty, naughty men are!" he exclaimed. "But let me hear your clever plan to play both sides and win hands down."

"When we find you escape from ship," began Francisco, "then Ramon think you have come here, for the tent is gone from the top of the bluff. So Ramon tell us to come here in big launch, to see what you do, an' he say capture you an' bring you back to him. When we get here we find this boat; but two fly away in air-machine, an' only one is left to capture. But Ramon not know if we come before the two fly

away or not; he not know if we three, who come to capture, get capture ourselves. So that is what we mus' do. We get capture. You tie up our arms an' our legs an' put gag in our mouth. Then you put us in boat an' take us away to your ship. If Ramon stop us, we say we have been capture. If Ramon see you take us on your ship, he think we have fight hard an' been capture, an' he sorry but not mad. Then, if he take your ship, he set us free; if warship come an' capture Ramon, we safe on your ship an' be hones' men, like you say, an' get reward from Madero. Is it not good way, señor?"

Chesty's sentiments wavered between indignation and admiration. Such a combination of low cunning, cowardice and absence of all shame he had never encountered in any being of human origin. But his cue was not to quarrel with the men at this time. It was enough to realize that instead of becoming a prisoner he was to carry his three captors, bound, to the ship, and so deprive Ramon of that many assistants.

In the outlaw's big launch, which was anchored just outside the tiny bay in the open sea, were plenty of stout ropes. Francisco waded out and got a supply, and then he proceeded deftly to bind his two comrades, trussing their arms to their

bodies and their legs together, so that they were helpless. The fellows grinned with delight at this experience, thinking how cleverly they were fooling Ramon Ganza, and when they were laid side by side on the beach Chesty stuck a lighted cigarette in the mouth of each, to afford them comfort and render them patient. Then Francisco bound his own legs and turned to Mr. Radley-Todd, who at once completed the operation and fastened Francisco's arms to his body—not too tightly, but in a very secure manner.

When this was done the big boy breathed a sigh of contentment and set himself down beside his captives.

"Now," said Francisco, "you mus' put us in big boat an' go back to ship with us."

Chesty shook his head.

"Not yet, old man," said he.

"Not yet?"

"No; I shall wait for night. It will be safe in the darkness."

"Then you are 'fraid of Ramon?"

"Not much. Just a little."

The prisoners wriggled uneasily.

"Listen, then, Señor American," observed Francisco. "If we not go before night, then release our bonds—make loose the ropes—so we

will rest more easy. When night come you will again tie us up."

Mr. Todd was unresponsive.

"Too much trouble, Francisco," he remarked, with a yawn. "Why do the work twice?"

"But—to lie here all day! San Sebastian, it is too horrible!"

"Fortunes of war, my dear boy. Ramon might appear unexpectedly, you know. We made a bargain, to ensure your safety, and we're going to keep it."

All three turned their heads to regard him with interest. There were sparks of glowering resentment in their dark eyes. Presently one of them said in humble tones:

"With your kind permission, Señor Americaño, I think I will change my mind."

"Certainly," replied Chesty; "do anything you please with your mind. It's yours, you know."

"I think, then, señor, I will not be your prisoner —until night."

"Don't think any such thing. It's wicked of you. Try to guide your thoughts into right channels. Make up your mind to be true to your bargain, because—you have to be."

Francisco groaned.

"All masters are cruel." he muttered. "This Americaño is as bad as Ramon!"

"But he's going to preserve your liberty and keep you out of jail," Chesty reminded him.

"And now, boys, try to sleep, for I'm going to take a little walk and stretch my legs."

CHAPTER XXV

SCUTTLED

A modicum of truth had been included in Ramon Ganza's recital of falsehoods during his interview with those on board the yacht. The outlaw was really in a tight place and only by forcing, in some way, the capture of the yacht could he hope to escape in a manner at all agreeable to his requirements.

By this time he was fully aware of the situation that confronted him. The flying-machine, if it encountered no accident, would reach the mainland and secure assistance for the stranded Americans. Perhaps it was true that President Madero would send a warship to capture him. Like most fugitive criminals, he had an exaggerated idea of his own importance. In any event he must abandon his island kingdom and seek another hiding place. His first intention—to make everyone of these intruders prisoners and subjects, so they could not betray him—was frustrated by the escape of the two in the aëroplane. It would be useless to capture the others when these two had

already carried the news to the authorities who were seeking him.

Two courses of procedure were open to Ganza. One was hastily to outfit his sixty-foot launch and run it to the South Pacific in search of some other island that was uninhabited, taking with him enough men and women to start a new colony. The other was to capture the yacht, put his most cherished possessions on board and then make off in it before any help could arrive from the mainland. The first was by far the most sensible course, but the beauties of the *Salvador* had so enraptured him and he was so well aware of the value a yacht would prove to him that he could not bring himself to abandon the idea of securing it until the last moment of grace had arrived.

This led him to consider how much time remained to him in which to carry out his intentions. He figured that at least thirty-six hours must elapse before any ship could possibly arrive. It was unlikely that the messengers would find a ship prepared to sail at a moment's notice, and therefore three or four days might pass before he would be disturbed by any outside foe.

Ramon had hoped to frighten the Americans into surrender and therefore had arranged the little drama so lately enacted; but the finale had disappointed him. There was no mine planted

beneath the yacht, but he had instructed one of his men to answer to his call, no matter what name he cried out, and to make the statement to the Americans which he had so cleverly invented. He made a mistake in thinking the flag of truce would protect him, for these strangers were not so simple as he had believed; so he had been forced to attempt a desperate escape, which succeeded because it was so bold and unexpected.

Recovering his breath as his white flannels dried upon the rocks, Ramon Ganza carefully considered his next move in the game. The yacht was a glorious prize. He must certainly have it for his own. The people on board seemed unequal to a successful defense. There might be half a dozen determined men among them, but the rest were women and cowards. He laughed as he recalled Mr. Tupper's terror at his threats.

The outlaw decided to carry the ship by assault. A night attack would be best. As soon as Francisco returned with the launch he would call his men together and instruct them what to do. Being informed of every movement on the part of the besieged, Ganza was aware that three people had escaped in the small launch to the bluff where the flying-machine lay. As soon as he discovered that the tent was gone he had dispatched Francisco with two men to capture the three, or as many as

he could find. When the aëroplane ascended Ganza watched it carefully and decided it contained but two people; therefore Francisco would find the other and presently return.

But Francisco failed to put in an appearance, to his master's great annoyance. That old tub of a launch was precious to him, for if all else failed he must use it to make good his escape. Also he needed the three men to assist in boarding the yacht in the night attack. His men were unarmed, while the yacht's crew seemed well provided with weapons of defense.

As the day wore on he considered sending the rowboat to search for Francisco's party, but decided not to risk it. Of course Francisco would come, in time; doubtless he was delayed because he experienced difficulty in capturing his man.

Evening came, but no Francisco. Ramon Ganza was perplexed; he was even somewhat troubled. He must defer the attack until the launch arrived, for he intended to use it to carry his men to the side of the yacht. His plan was to have the launch run up to one side and make a noisy attack, to create a diversion and concentrate the attention of those on board, while he and a party of picked men stole silently to the other side in the rowboat, climbed to the deck and overcame all who opposed them. The bow was too high to scale, where it

rested on the beach; the attack must be made near the stern, which sat low in the water.

Therefore the launch was quite necessary, as were the three men who were absent with it, so Ramon was angry with Francisco for not returning more promptly.

The outlaw paced up and down the rocks in the starlight and cursed his dilatory lieutenant most heartily.

But the launch was coming. In fact, two launches were coming to the bay.

As soon as night had really settled down, Mr. Radley-Todd quit loafing and suddenly became active. He carried his trussed and helpless prisoners, one by one, to the small launch and laid them gently along the bottom. He had already, during the afternoon, waded out to the larger launch of Ganza, bored a large hole in its bottom and then stopped the inrushing water with a plug. He chuckled while doing this, being greatly pleased by what he called his "foxy plan to fool the pirate."

With his prisoners aboard, the boy shoved the *Salvador's* launch into the water and cautiously paddled it between the rocks and to the side of the big launch, to which he attached it by means of a rope.

"I think I shall gag you boys, as you sug-

gested," he said to the prisoners, who by this time had become sullen and decidedly unfriendly.

"No!" cried Francisco, partly in anger and partly in fear; "it is not necessary. We know what to do."

"Will you promise not to cry out and attract Ramon's attention?"

"We swear it!" they all cried eagerly.

"Then I think I shall gag you. Not because I doubt your word but because I've whittled out three lovely gags and I'm anxious to see how they work."

They began to protest vigorously at such unkind treatment, but Chesty gagged them, by turns, and they were effectually silenced.

"You boys are splendid actors," he told them, admiringly, "and you are performing your parts with great credit to us all. No one would guess this was your plan, would he? Ramon least of all. If we are not captured, you will make an important addition to our party on the yacht. If we are, you will lie gloriously to Ramon and say I sneaked up behind you and sandbagged all three before you saw me. Eh? Never mind answering, for you can't."

As he spoke, Chesty climbed into the big launch and started the engines. They grumbled and refused to act, at first, but finally overcame their

reluctance and the boat chug-chugged on its way to the south bay, making such a racket that the owls thought it was defying them and redoubled their frantic screeches.

"Ramon will be certain to hear me coming," reflected the boy as the boat swept on. "He's a clever scoundrel, that Mexican; exceptionally clever; but if he guesses this riddle he's a wizard."

He kept the launch well out from the shore and as it approached the points of rock behind which the yacht lay hidden he set the steering wheel to carry the boat a couple of hundred yards past the entrance to the bay, lashing it firmly in place. Then, while the engines continued their monotonous "chug-chug," he pried the plug out of the bottom of the boat, crept aboard the *Salvador's* launch and unfastened the rope, cutting the two craft apart. The big launch quickly forged ahead and Chesty sat down and let the smaller boat drift peacefully where it lay.

Ramon Ganza had heard his boat coming, as Chesty had intended he should. Greatly relieved, but still angry with Francisco, he ran as far out upon the point as the rocks would permit and peered through the starlight to catch sight of the approaching launch.

Presently it appeared, making good time, the old engines working steadily and doing their full

duty. But it did not turn into the bay, for some extraordinary reason; instead, it kept straight on and headed for some indefinite point out at sea.

"Francisco!" shouted Ganza, in a rage; "Francisco—villain—fool! What are you doing? Wake up, Francisco! The idiot is asleep."

As the precious launch did not halt, the outlaw ran along the shore, following its track and shaking his fist at the perverse Francisco with vengeful energy. Most of his men, attracted by their chief's excitement, left their posts to join him on the shore; the others gazed wonderingly in the direction of the disappearing launch.

Meantime, Chesty Todd cautiously paddled his little boat into the bay, crept to the side of the yacht and uttered a low whistle—the signal agreed upon. Those on board, who had been interested in Ramon's shouts and suspected something was about to happen, lost no time in lowering the davits and Chesty promptly attached the grappling hooks. A few moments later the launch and its occupants were safely on deck and the boy stepped out to be greeted by hearty handshakes and congratulations on his safe return.

"You'll find three prisoners in the launch, Captain Krell," he said. "When you remove their gags they'll protest they are our friends; but I

wouldn't trust 'em. Better lock 'em in the cage until this cruel war is over."

"What has become of the Mexican's launch?" asked Mr. Cumberford. "The pirates seem to be having some trouble over it."

"It won't bother 'em for long," replied Mr. Todd, complacently. "The boat is headed out to sea, all by its lonesome; but there's a hole in the bottom and it's fast filling with salt water. I imagine that within the next fifteen minutes it will go to Davy Jones's locker, and be out of commission."

CHAPTER XXVI

ORISSA RETURNS

If ever man was thoroughly perplexed it was Ramon Ganza the outlaw. He heard his launch proceed for a distance out to sea, then listened while the engines hesitated and stopped, and saw the boat on which his liberty might depend whirl slowly around and disappear beneath the waves. What could it mean? Were his men on board, and had they met with some astonishing accident, or had they deliberately committed suicide? The curses died on his lips; the affair was too startling and too serious for mere raving; he must try to think of a logical solution of the problem.

The loss of the launch, his last refuge from captivity and imprisonment, left him caught like a wolf in a trap—in case he failed to get possession of the yacht. All night long he sat on a rock by the sea, smoking his black cheroots and thinking —thinking—thinking. Neither he nor his men knew that Chesty Todd had returned to the yacht; but if Ramon had known it he would not have attached especial importance to the fact. It

would merely mean one more person to capture during the assault.

Morning found Ganza still deep in thought. He glanced rather uneasily at the ocean and at times swept the horizon with his glasses, which were slung by a strap to his shoulder. His men brought him food and a cup of hot coffee, but dared no' speak to him in his present mood. They suspected his case was growing desperate, yet they still retained confidence in their resourceful, clever master, who had never yet failed to accomplish whatever he undertook.

In this crisis of his career the fugitive, usually irritable and quick to act, proved his strength of mind by taking time to consider his position from all points and to weigh carefully the merits of the different plans that suggested themselves. He realized that an error at this time would prove fatal.

The hours wore on until, at about the middle of the afternoon, as Ganza made one of his periodic inspections of the horizon, his glasses caught a speck in the sky—a speck that moved and grew larger. At first he thought it a gull or an eagle; later he changed his mind, for the speck rapidly increased in size and took form, and the form was that of an aëroplane.

Those on the yacht saw it now and great was

the wonder and excitement it caused. Here was a messenger from the great world, bringing them hope of succor or black disappointment. Presently the broad spreading planes bore down upon the island and circled gracefully over the ship.

"It's Orissa!" they cried in chorus and Chesty Todd added: "She wants to land on deck. Clear a space—quick!"

They did the best they could. It seemed like a tiny place for that great sweeping thing to land on and even Sybil exclaimed: "She'll never make it in the world!" But Orissa, hovering above them in her Aircraft, observed carefully the conditions below and shutting off her engine began to volplane.

The huge machine settled quietly down and alighted fairly upon the deck. One rail caught the lower plane and tipped it, but the girl leaped lightly from her seat and was caught by Mr. Cumberford, whose gray eyes sparkled with joy from behind their spectacles.

You may be sure the brave girl received a glad welcome, but as soon as her safety was assured she was deluged with questions. The ping of a rifle ball warned them to scuttle below to the cabin, where Orissa tried to explain.

"Why on earth did you venture to come back?" demanded Madeline. "We had told ourselves

that you, at least, were safe from the dangers that menace us, and it pleased us to know that. But where is your brother?"

"Did you get to land?" cried half a dozen voices, eagerly. "What did you do? Tell us!"

Orissa laughed and held up both hands, imploring silence.

"I came to bring you good news," she began. "And now that you are assured of that, please let me tell the story my own way, or I shall bungle it."

"Go ahead," they answered and settled themselves to listen.

"We followed the route Captain Krell had mapped out for us," said Orissa, "and in four hours after leaving here we sighted the Mexican coast. Fifteen minutes' run to the north brought us to the village of San Blas, where there is a telegraph office. We landed and had some difficulty in satisfying the authorities that we were harmless Americans, but finally they agreed to escort us to the telegraph office under guard. We wired our story direct to President Madero, putting it as briefly as possible and asking him for a warship to rescue our friends and capture Ramon Ganza. There was no answer until evening, when we received a message from the Secretary of the Navy saying he had conferred with the President

and Secretary of State and would be glad to accede to our request. In eight or ten days he thought he could spare a warship to go to the island for Ganza. Unfortunately, the entire navy was in use at the present time.

"That dashed our hopes, you may be sure, for we feared you couldn't hold Ganza at bay for so long; So Steve and I determined to fly to San Diego and secure help there. The Secretary of the Navy had wired the authorities of San Blas to afford us every consideration and hospitality, so we filled our tanks with gasoline and slept at a little inn until daybreak. Then we were off for the north, and in two hours met the United States torpedo fleet, on its way to Magdalena Bay for target practice. We made out the flagship and dropped to the water beside it. Commodore Davis at once laid to and sent a boat to us. Steve went aboard and explained fully to the commodore our story and the need for immediate help. As a result the *Mermaid* was signaled and its captain presently came aboard and received his orders. He was to take us directly to this island, drive off Ganza or fight him, as circumstances might require, and then assist in getting the *Salvador* afloat again. If he captures Ganza he is to carry him away a prisoner and turn him and his men over to the Mexican authorities at Magdalena.

"Captain Swanson undertook the adventure gladly and is now on his way here with the *Mermaid,* with Steve to guide him. My brother and I thought it best for me to come on ahead and tell you the good news, for we have worried about you and knew that with rescue at hand you would have courage to hold out, no matter how desperate your condition. So here I am, and the *Mermaid* will arrive either to-night or early in the morning."

They were indeed delighted with this assurance and it put new heart into the most timorous of those aboard.

"However," said Chesty Todd, "we seem to be in no danger, just now, and since our clever enemy has failed to scare us into surrender he has remained quiet and behaved himself as well as could be expected."

They told Orissa all that had transpired in her absence and the conversation continued all during the dinner—on which the chef exercised his best talents, in honor of Orissa's return—and even until bedtime, there was so much to say.

Chesty went on watch at eleven o'clock, and as he leaned silently over the rail at a point near the bow of the launch he detected a series of queer sounds coming from below. This part of the yacht was high on the shelving beach and it was

here that they had arranged huge piles of rock, on either side, to hold the keel level It sounded to Mr. Todd as if some one was at work near these rocks, for on account of the swell of the boat's side it was impossible to see, from the deck, anyone below, in case he kept close to the keel.

So Chesty crept aft, held a whispered conversation with Captain Krell, and quickly divested himself of his clothing. At the stern, which was settled quite close to the surface of the water, the boy let himself down by means of a rope, descending hand under hand, and silently dropped into the dark water. Swimming was one of Radley-Todd's principal accomplishments and he scarcely made a ripple as he crept alongside the boat until the bow came into full view. The night was somewhat darker than usual, but the American had sharp eyes and it did not take him long to discover that the besiegers were employed in removing the rocks from the right hand side of the keel.

Instantly comprehending their purpose in this, Chesty turned and quickly regained the stern, climbing to the deck. His report to Captain Krell seemed so serious, because it meant a desperate attack presently, that it was promptly decided to arouse the entire party and warn them that a crisis was at hand.

CHAPTER XXVII

FACING THE CRISIS

Consternation reigned in the cabin when the principals assembled there with white and startled faces. On deck Captain Krell was instructing his men how to act in the threatened emergency. Pietro was among them, accepting his rifle and his instructions willingly, but shaking his head at what he considered a vain attempt to resist Ramon Ganza.

"Ramon great man!" he said to Captain Krell. "Ramon always win; nobody can conquer him. I knew Ramon would win this time, an' when he does he will capture me an' whip me hard. All right; I know I am to be whipped at the time Chica tell me to leave Ramon. Never min'. Pietro can stand it, for others have been whipped by Ramon an' lived—with marks like a zebra's on their skins."

In the cabin Chesty was trying to explain the situation.

"It's this way," he said; "when the rocks are all removed the yacht will fall over on her side, as

she was at first, with the rail quite near to the water. You remember how she lay before we propped her up. Well, that means we have no secure footing on deck and that the pirates can easily climb aboard and have the best of the argument. If we slip, we fall into their arms; if we stick to the deck—like flies to a ceiling, they'll rush and get us."

"We can't fight from the deck," declared Cumberford. "Tell Captain Krell to come here."

The captain arrived and after a consultation it was decided to gather all hands in the cabin and fortify it as strongly as possible. The roof projected a few feet above the deck and there was a row of small windows on either side, but these were supplied with heavy shutters designed for use in case of storms, when the shutters were readily fixed in place. The stairway might be well guarded by one man, and above the windows were small ventilators through which several rifles could be pointed. By standing upon the cabin table the defenders could command the deck in this way. They were instructed not to shoot, however, unless absolutely obliged to. All the hatches were battened down, so that if Ganza gained the deck he could not get below and was welcome to remain aboard until the rescuers arrived.

Orissa, who had listened silently, now approached Mr. Cumberford and said:

"When the yacht tips, our Aircraft will be ruined, for the chances are it will slide overboard. Even if it doesn't, those scoundrels will wreck it completely, for it will be quite at their mercy. So I've decided, while there is yet time, to fly it across to the bluff, where I can remain until you are rescued."

"Can you manage to get away from the deck?"

"Easily."

"Then I think it best for you to go."

"May I take Sybil with me?"

He hesitated a moment; then replied: "Yes. It will be a good thing to have you girls away from here when the attack is made. Here you could be of no service whatever, and your absence will—eh—give us more room to defend the cabin."

"You will have to act quickly, Miss Kane," suggested Chesty.

"I know. Come, Sybil."

They drew on their jackets as they went on deck, both girls realizing that no time must be lost if they hoped to get away. Once the yacht tipped on her side it would be impossible to fly the machine.

As they took their places Mr. Radley-Todd inquired: "Plenty of gasoline?"

"I think so," said Orissa. "I'm not sure how much is left in the tanks, but it ought to be enough to get us to the bluff. Whirl the propeller, Chesty."

He did so, and the engine started with a roar. Cumberford and Chesty steadied the Aircraft until the motor had acquired full speed and then Orissa threw in the clutch and the big aëroplane rose as easily as a bird takes flight and ascended into the starlit sky at a steep angle. This feat is what is called "cloud climbing" and Orissa understood it perfectly.

It seemed a bold thing to undertake such a flight in the nighttime, but the Flying Girl's friends had so much confidence in her skill that they never considered the danger of the undertaking. Across the barren island to the bluff was so unimportant a flight to one of Orissa's experience that when she was once away they believed her quite safe.

While the men stood watching the Aircraft mount into the dim sky the yacht suddenly trembled and keeled over, throwing them all flat upon the deck. With one accord they scrambled up and dashed into the cabin, which they reached just as Ramon Ganza and his men swarmed over the rail.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRISONER

"What's wrong, Ris?" asked Sybil, as the engine skipped and wavered.

"Gasoline," was the brief answer.

"Oh. Can you get to the bluff?"

"I—don't—know. There!" as the propeller ceased to whirl; "now I'll volplane. It's a long reach, Syb; but we'll land somewhere—right side up."

The dim mountain seemed far ahead of them; below was the "dip," or valley, which lay between the rock ridges and the mountain. As they had casually glanced toward it in former times, it seemed a forbidding place, slimy and moist, devoid alike of any green thing or living creature. Even the owls shunned the "dip."

To-night, when everything was obscure, they seemed gliding into a black pit. Orissa had to manipulate her levers cautiously, for she could not tell just when they would reach the ground. As it was they bumped, bounded forward, bumped

again and brought up suddenly between two boulders that topped a rugged knoll.

"Any damage?" asked Sybil, catching her breath.

"Not much, I'm sure," replied her chum. "But here we are; and here we'll stay until some one comes with gasoline. Can you see anything, Syb?"

"The mountain, over there against the sky. It seems so near I could almost touch it. It wouldn't have taken but a few drops more to have landed us on the bluff, drat the luck!"

"See anything else?"

"Where?"

"Around us."

"No; but I can smell something. Smells like spoiled gasoline. Does gasoline ever spoil, Ris?"

"Not to my knowledge. But come; let's crawl into the boat and get the blankets out. Wherever we are, it's our hotel, and we must make the best of it."

Skyward, there could be distinguished the mountain at the west and the rock hills at the east; but the pocket in which they lay was black as ink. From the boat Orissa managed to open the aluminum chest and take out the blankets. They then arranged a temporary bed in the bottom of the boat and covered themselves up.

"Anyhow, I managed to save the Aircraft," sighed Orissa, contentedly. Then she sat bolt upright and cried: "Listen!"

"The battle's on," answered Sybil, as a succession of wild shouts reached their ears. It was very aggravating to be so ignorant of what was happening to their friends. The shouts continued, at intervals, but there was no sound of firearms. Evidently the Mexicans had gained the deck but had found it a barren victory. On the mountain the owls were hooting and flying about as usual, but the shouts that had come from the bay were of such a different nature that the shrieks of the night-birds did not drown them.

Suddenly a broad streak of light shot over them, rested a moment on the mountain, swayed to right and left and then sank below the ridges of rock. Above the bay where the *Salvador* was beached thin shafts of white light radiated, illuminating the sky like an aurora borealis.

"A searchlight!"

"The torpedo boat!" the girls cried in one breath; and then they sat trembling and straining their ears to listen.

A dull, angry "boom!" rent the air and echoed from the mountain. It was a warning gun from the *Mermaid*. The shouts became screams of fear. Then silence followed, complete and enduring.

Orissa breathed heavily. "It's all over, Sybil!" she gasped.

"I—I wonder if—anyone was—hurt."

"Any of our people?"

"Of course."

"I think not. That gun was merely a signal and I imagine the Mexicans ran like rats. How fortunate it was that Captain Swanson arrived with the *Mermaid* so soon!"

"How unfortunate he didn't come sooner. We wouldn't have been in this awkward predicament. It will take them hours to get to us over those sharp rocks."

Orissa did not reply. She was trying to understand the events transpiring around the *Salvador*. Had there been a tragedy? Or had the torpedo boat merely frightened the outlaws, as she had imagined, and driven them away?

There was no sleep for the isolated girls during the brief hours preceding the dawn. As it gradually lightened they peered about them to see where they were, and by degrees made out their surroundings. There were fewer rocks in this cup-shaped hollow than in other parts of the island. On the knoll where the Aircraft rested were the two big rocks which had arrested its progress, and between these the body of the aluminum boat was tightly wedged. At intervals

throughout the valley were similar rocky hummocks, but all the space between consisted of an oozy, damp soil of a greenish-brown color, with glints of red where the sun caught it prismatically. Looking at this ooze critically, as the light strengthened, it seemed to the girls to shift somewhat, showing here and there a thick bubble which slowly formed and disappeared.

Orissa put her hand over the side of the boat and withdrew it again.

"Look, Sybil," she exclaimed. "It's oil."

"Hair or salad oil, Ris?"

Orissa sniffed at her dipped finger.

"Petroleum. This is the crude article, and seeps up from some store of oil far down in the earth. There would be a fortune in this find, Syb, if it happened to be in America. Out here it is, of course, valueless."

"Don't they make kerosene and gasoline of it?"

"Yes; of course."

"Then make some gasoline and let's fly away."

Orissa laughed.

"If you will furnish the distillery, Syb, I'll make the gasoline," she said; "but I believe it's a long, slow process, and——"

"Look!" cried Sybil, with a start, as she pointed a slim finger toward the east. From a far distant ridge a man came bounding over the rocks, leap-

ing from one to another with little hesitation in picking his way. He was a big man, but as the light was still dim they could see no more than his huge form. Presently he paused to look behind him; then on he dashed again. He had come from the direction of the bay and was at first headed toward the mountain, but in one of his pauses, whether to regain his breath or look behind, he caught sight of the aëroplane and at once turned directly toward it.

"Do you think," asked Sybil, uneasily, "it is one of our people come to look for us?"

"No," returned Orissa, positively. "That man is a fugitive. He has escaped over the rock hills and is trying to find some hiding place."

"Then I wonder he dares come in our direction."

"It is *strange,*" agreed Orissa, with a shudder as she remembered how helpless they were.

Then, with fascinated gaze, the two girls fell silent and watched the approaching fugitive. As he neared that part of the valley where the oil seeped up he proceeded more cautiously, leaping from one point of rock—or hummock—to another. Once, when forced to step on the level ground, the oil tripped him. He slipped and fell, but was instantly up again and bounding on his way. It seemed no easy task to make speed over such a

rough and trackless way, yet here it was easier to proceed than back in those almost impassable hills. It was wonderful that he had succeeded in crossing them at all.

"I think," said Orissa, as she sat cold and staring, "it is Ramon Ganza."

"The outlaw? But he wears white flannels."

"Not now. He probably changed them for the night attack; but I can see the rings glitter on his fingers, and—none of the other Mexicans is so big."

Sybil nestled a little closer to her friend.

"Have you a revolver, Ris?"

Orissa shook her head.

"No arms at all—not even a hatpin?"

"Nothing whatever to use for defense."

The man was quite near now. Yes; it was Ramon Ganza. His clothes were torn by the rocks and hung around him in rags, and where he had fallen the thick, slimy oil clung to them. His face was smeared with dust and grime and the whole aspect of the outlaw was ghastly and repulsive —perhaps rendered more acute by the jewelled rings that loaded his fingers.

He was obliged to step with more care as he neared the aëroplane, in which crouched the two girls, and finally he came to a halt on a hummock a few paces away. The oil lay more thickly

around the Aircraft than elsewhere, and Ramon Ganza eyed it suspiciously. Then he spoke, resting his hands on his hips and leering insolently at Sybil and Orissa.

"So, I have caught you, then," he cried. "Why did you try to escape?"

"For the same reason you are trying to escape, perhaps," retorted Orissa, summoning what courage she could command. "But I warn you that our friends will presently come for us, and—you may not care to meet them."

He uttered an angry snarl and cast a quick glance around the valley. In all its broad stretch not a person other than themselves was visible.

Ramon sat down on his knoll, breathing heavily from his long run.

"Yes, I have run away," he admitted, bitterness and hate in his tone. "I can fight ten—or twenty, perhaps—with my single hand; but not fifty. They have come to put me in prison, those fiends over there," jerking his thumb toward the bay, "and seeing they were too strong for me to oppose, I came away. It is what you call discreet —eh?—which is more safe, if less noble, than valor. But they have the island and they will hunt me down. And once more I shall laugh at them—once more Ramon Ganza will defy them all!"

"How?" asked Orissa, curiously.

"Have you not the flying-machine—the airship?" he asked, simply. "And are you not here alone, and in my power? It carries but two, I see, so one of you shall stay here. The other must fly with me to my own island, where I will take a sailboat and—vanish from the dogs who are hounding me."

"That," said Orissa, with forced calmness, for her heart was beating wildly, "is impossible."

He uttered a fierce growl.

"It is *not* impossible," he cried. "I have seen your machine fly, and know it can fly when you want it to. It must fly now, or by San Filippe I will tumble you both out and fly it myself. It is best that you not arouse my anger, for Ramon Ganza is desperate and will not be denied. Get ready, girl! We will fly to my island, or——" He laughed harshly. "Or you will both ruin your beautiful toilets, and—the mire is dangerous," he added.

"We have no gasoline," pleaded Orissa.

"Pah! a trick to deceive me."

"No; it is true," cried Sybil, who grew more quiet as fear possessed her.

He hesitated, a look of despair flashing across his features. Then he said with grim determination: "I will see for myself," and stepped reck-

lessly into the pool of oil that lay between him and the hummock where the aëroplane perched.

The slime reached to his ankle, but he kept doggedly on. The second step sent him knee-deep into the ooze and he had to struggle to wade farther in. But now he sank nearly to his waist and the sticky soil held him fast. Then suddenly the man seemed to realize his peril and uttered a shrill cry of terror.

"Help, young ladies! For the love of humanity —help! Will you see me die like this?" he screamed.

Orissa and Sybil, both horrified, had risen to their feet. The sinking outlaw was fully five yards distant and there seemed no possible way to aid him. But it was terrible to allow a human being to perish in such a way, even when it was a confessed enemy who stood in peril. Orissa caught up a blanket and hurled it toward him, and he seized it eagerly and spread it around him for support. Next moment Sybil had hastily folded the second blanket and cast it with all her strength toward Ganza. One corner he caught and in a moment had added it to the first, now becoming saturated with oil. Yet the blankets would not have availed much had not Ramon's feet now rested upon a rock far beneath the surface, effectually preventing him from sinking any lower.

Almost waist-deep in the putty-like mire he stood a fast prisoner, for no effort of his own could enable him to free himself.

He realized, presently, that he was not fated to be entombed in the mire, so part of his old assurance returned to him. As he stared at the girls and they returned his gaze with horrified looks, he remarked:

"Well, I am caught, as you see; but it was no officer of the law that did it. Ramon Ganza can defy mankind, as he has often proved, but he bows to Nature. Also, young ladies, I beg to point out that—if you have spoken truly—you are likewise caught, and alas! we cannot assist one another. What, then, shall we do for amusement?"

"I think," said Sybil gravely, "you ought to pray."

"I? I have forgotten how. What then? Shall we sing songs? If you will accompany the chorus I will delight your ears with my excellent tenor voice."

This bravado, coming from a man stuck fast in the mire, was so gruesome that it made the girls shudder with aversion. But Sybil, happening to glance up, cried with sudden animation: "Look, Orissa!" and pointed with a trembling finger.

In the distance a group of men had appeared over the edge of the rock hills. They saw

the stalled aëroplane and waved their arms encouragingly.

Ganza screwed his head around with some difficulty and also observed the rescue party.

"It cannot matter," he said coolly. "As well one prison as another, and no Mexican dungeon could hug me tighter than this."

He fell silent, however, and no further remarks were exchanged as the distant party drew nearer. They were forced by the treacherous nature of the valley to move cautiously and when they entered the area of oil seepage more than one slipped in the slimy pools. But gradually they approached the spot where the aëroplane rested and now Orissa and Sybil could make out Stephen Kane, Mr. Cumberford, Captain Krell, Chesty Todd and an unknown man in uniform, who were accompanied by several seamen.

The girls stood up and waved their handkerchiefs and then cried out warnings to beware the mire. Not until the rescuers were quite near to the place did they perceive the upper half of Ramon Ganza protruding from the imprisoning slime.

"Dear me," cried Mr. Cumberford; "this is interesting; very! How are you, girls? All right?"

Through the bombardment of eager questions

they assured their friends that they had suffered no serious discomfort because of the accident to the Aircraft. "But," added Sybil, "we had a good fright when Ramon Ganza threatened us, unless we assisted him to escape in our aëroplane. Fortunately the mire came to our assistance, for he stepped into a soft place and it held him fast—as you see."

All eyes turned upon the helpless outlaw, who nodded his head with astonishing nonchalance.

"I bid you good morning, señors," said he. "When you are sufficiently rested from your walk, be kind enough to pull me out of this loving embrace; but gently, or you may dislocate my bones."

"Who is this?" asked the officer in uniform, a fine featured young man.

"The rascal who has so boldly annoyed us, regardless of consequences," replied Cumberford, frowning upon the Mexican. "He escaped us last night, but we have him now, sure enough, and I intend to see he is handed over to the authorities of his country, whose laws he has defied."

"What did he do?" the officer inquired, gazing at Ganza curiously.

"Permit me to explain that I robbed a bank—a bank engaged in robbing others under government sanction," said Ganza. "To rob is a small

thing, señors; but it is a crime to be discovered robbing. That was my fault. Others in my native land, who are more successful embezzlers than I, are to-day respected, rich and happy."

"Was that your only crime?"

"So far as is known, señor. Otherwise I am very good man and quite respectable."

"He is a tyrant and a bully, and whips his men if they disobey him," declared Steve.

"Pah! they are curs. The whip is less than they deserve," retorted Ganza. "But permit me to remind you of my present discomfort, señors. I will gladly exchange this bog for a Mexican prison."

They managed to drag him out, none too gently, and the seamen scraped the oily slime from his legs and body so that he could stand erect.

Then they turned to examine the condition of the aëroplane.

CHAPTER XXIX

ORISSA DECIDES

Only by taking the Aircraft entirely apart, decided Steve, might he hope to remove it to the bay, for it could not be flown from the hummock where it was wedged between the rocks. But they could not wait to do that now. The girls were very near one of those feminine crises so familiar to Mrs. Tupper, and their friends realized the nervous strain they had endured and made haste to lead them back to the yacht. The seamen looked after Ramon Ganza, who was so physically exhausted by his late experience that he made no endeavor to escape.

It was a tedious climb, by no means devoid of danger, but so anxious were Orissa and Sybil to escape from the dread valley that they energetically persevered until the last rock hill was passed and they descended the slope to the inlet.

There lay the *Salvador;* keeled over, indeed, but safe and sound. Just without the bay floated the *Mermaid,* and one of her boats was run upon

the beach and another clung to the *Salvador's* side.

A hearty cheer greeted the return of the rescue party when Orissa and Sybil were observed approaching with them, and Captain Swanson himself came forward to offer his congratulations.

On their way, Steve had briefly related the events of the night attack and told how the defenders, fortified within the cabin and below decks, had been quite safe from Ganza until the arrival of the torpedo boat relieved the situation. Then the Mexicans fled and made frantic attempts to escape, hiding themselves in the wilderness of rocks that littered the island.

When Captain Swanson learned of the capture of Ramon Ganza and the rescue of the young ladies he decided to attempt no pursuit of the scattered Mexicans but to apply himself promptly to the task of floating the yacht, which he succeeded in doing before night. The *Salvador* was in no way injured and as soon as she had anchored outside the bay was again in commission and fully able to care for herself.

Madeline invited the officers of the *Mermaid* to dine aboard her yacht and Monsieur Risette prepared a repast that surprised even his employer, so elaborate and delicious it proved.

As they conversed together afterward, com-

menting upon the exciting experiences of the yacht and her company and the daring flights of the Kane Hydro-Aircraft, Madeline said to Captain Swanson:

"What shall we do with Ramon Ganza?"

"Where is he, Miss Dentry?"

"Locked up in our cage. But I don't want him aboard. Won't you take him to Magdalena and turn him over to the Mexican police?"

"I am not sure I have authority to arrest the man," replied the captain gravely. "I will send a wireless to the fleet to-night and endeavor to get the admiral and receive his instructions concerning Ganza."

He wrote out a message at once and dispatched it to his ship by one of his men, that the wireless operator aboard might repeat it a number of times in the attempt to reach the ship for which it was intended. A wireless message travels farther by night and is more distinct.

Madeline now urged Captain Swanson to carry Chica and Pietro to Magdalena, which would enable them to reach their homes quickly and he agreed to do this. Miss Dentry supplied the two with sufficient money for their needs and the Redbeard and the child said their good-byes and were rowed to the *Mermaid.*

The yacht party, now reunited and safe from

further molestation, thoroughly enjoyed the evening and expressed their gratitude again and again for the prompt assistance rendered them by their fellow countrymen. Madeline had already written a nice letter to the admiral, which she entrusted to Captain Swanson.

As Orissa and Sybil, as well as many others of the party, had passed a trying and sleepless night, the officers thoughtfully retired early, returning to their quarters on the *Mermaid.*

Breakfast was in progress on the *Salvador* next morning when a note was brought from the captain of the torpedo boat.

"I was fortunate in reaching the admiral," it said, "and I beg to enclose you a copy of the message I have received from him in reply. I further regret to state that I am ordered to rejoin the fleet without delay and must therefore bid you all adieu."

The wireless read: "President Madero proclaimed a general amnesty to Mexican refugees some three months ago. On the list of pardons appears the name of Ramon Ganza."

Madeline drew a long breath.

"I'm sorry for that," she said. "Ramon Ganza has escaped the penalty of breaking his country's laws and we are powerless to punish

him ourselves—even though he struck poor Mason with a knife."

"How is Mason getting along?" asked Orissa.

"Very nicely," stated Mr. Cumberford. "It was a deep cut, but reached no vital organs and the man will soon be as good as new."

"That does not alter the fact that Ganza is a wicked desperado," said Sybil.

"It's a shame to allow him to escape," exclaimed Mr. Tupper, indignantly. "Can't we arrest him for disturbing the peace, and trying to capture our yacht, and attempting to murder one of the crew?"

"No," replied Mr. Cumberford. "This island doesn't belong to the United States. I believe it is Mexican territory. But if we can prove damages we might be able to recover from the Mexican government—and then, again, we might not"

"I'll never put in a claim, for my part," said Madeline, laughing. "But what are we to do with Ramon Ganza—and those three rascals imprisoned with him, whom Chesty captured and brought to us?"

"Let Chesty get rid of them; they're his prisoners," suggested Sybil.

"The chief bandit is your own prisoner—and Orissa's," declared Chesty. "What do you intend to do with him, Miss Cumberford?"

Sybil laughed.

"It's a problem," she confessed. "Can you solve it, Miss Dentry?"

"I fear not," answered Madeline, indeed puzzled. "Our prisoners are likely to prove white elephants on our hands. To carry them to America would involve us in endless difficulties, and—I have other plans, wherein their presence is better dispensed with."

"Then," said Chesty, after due reflection, "let us leave them all behind us, on the island. Not this island, where they would be prisoners and perhaps starve, because I have sunk their gasoline launch and they cannot get away, but on Ramon Ganza's own island. Then the fellow may decide his future as he deems best and we may wash our hands of the whole disagreeable affair."

"I hope you won't inform him that he is pardoned," said Mr. Tupper, earnestly.

"Why not?" asked Madeline. "Let us return good for evil. Perhaps, when Ramon Ganza is no longer a refugee and can face the world a free man, he will redeem his past and become honest."

"I doubt it," declared Mr. Cumberford; "but I think you are right to give him the chance."

It was so decided. There remained on Owl Island but one of Ganza's rowboats which would be available for use by the men hidden among

the rocks, but at the larger island was a small sailboat in which, during calm weather, the chief might go for his men and transport them to their former quarters.

Next morning a party accompanied Steve into the valley once more, where the Aircraft was taken apart and brought with considerable labor to the bay, from whence it was conveyed to the yacht and compactly stored away below decks.

"There's no use putting it together until we get back home," said the inventor; and his partner, Mr. Cumberford, agreed with him.

This task had consumed the entire day, during which Orissa and Sybil had kept to their staterooms, trying to quiet their nerves and get some much-needed sleep. Madeline, in the meantime, had ordered a store of provisions placed on the beach for the use of the band of Mexicans until they were rescued by their leader, as she did not wish them to suffer for lack of food, however mischievous and lawless they might be.

The following day Captain Krell hoisted anchor and headed for the larger island, and it was good to all to feel the water slipping along underneath the *Salvador's* thin keel again.

Ramon Ganza accepted his liberty with the same stoical indifference that characterized all his actions. He strutted a bit when Chesty told him

of his pardon, but declared he would continue to inhabit the island where he was virtually a king.

"With no fear of a prison to haunt me," he said, "I can make the island a paradise. Many Mexicans will settle there and become my subjects."

"You'll have to cut out the flogging, then," suggested Chesty.

"It will gratify me to do so. Before, I have the obligation to flog the disobedient ones because I dared not send them away; but now, if they prove obstinate, I may send them back to Mexico."

He took off his hat with an elaborate bow as the *Salvador's* boat left him standing with his three men on the little dock below his residence; but Francisco and the other two scowled fiercely at Mr. Todd, whom they reproached for deceiving them about Madero's reward, although they had elected to remain with their old master rather than be taken to America.

"It's a good thing for civilization that those villains are sequestrated on a far-away, unknown island," remarked Chesty, when he had regained the yacht's deck. "I suppose anyone can reform, if he tries hard, but I'll bet a hat that Francisco and his comrades never make the attempt."

"We are well rid of them, in any event," asserted Mr. Cumberford.

Orissa and Sybil appeared at dinner, both considerably improved in spirits after their long rest.

"When do we sail for San Diego?" Sybil asked Madeline.

"Captain Krell is ready. I am waiting for Orissa and you to decide," was the reply.

Orissa looked up in surprise.

"What have we to decide?" she inquired.

"Merely which way we shall proceed. My yacht hasn't had a fair trial yet and I had in mind a trip to Honolulu before we went in chase of two runaway girls. We still have on board enough coal and supplies for such a trip and I have resolved to invite you all to make it in my company—in which case we will head directly for Hawaii from here."

Orissa was thoughtful for a time and looked inquiringly at Steve, who smiled in return.

"I think such a trip would do us all good," he suggested.

"The Flying Girl has no important engagements, at present," added Mr. Todd, the press agent.

"If she had, I think she deserves a little recreation after her late trying experiences," said Mr. Cumberford.

"Why, Orissa, it has all been decided in

advance," exclaimed Sybil. "They're merely asking our consent out of politeness."

Orissa turned to Madeline and pressed her hand gratefully.

"You've really been our guardian angel, Miss Dentry," she said. "We can never repay your great kindness and generosity, nor properly thank you for what you have done for us."

"Why should you?" asked Madeline. "Think what a splendid time I've had during this adventure, all due to the Flying Girl and her chum—and to a defect in the famous Kane Aircraft. But if you sincerely wish to please me, come with me on the trip to Honolulu."

"Of course I will," Orissa responded. "I've always longed for an ocean voyage, and in such company, and on the dear old *Salvador,* the trip will be delightful."

The others of the Kane-Cumberford party, who were every one eager to go, rapturously applauded this decision.

THE END.

Exhilarating Books for Girls of Today

The Flying Girl Series

By EDITH VAN DYNE
Author of "Aunt Jane's Nieces" Series

CAPITAL up-to-the-minute stories for girls and young people, in which the author is at her very best. Thrilling and full of adventure, but of that wholesome type parents are glad to put in the hands of their daughters. Two titles:

The Flying Girl

Orissa Kane, self-reliant and full of sparkling good nature, under-study for her brother, prospective inventor and aviator whose experiments put the Kane family into great difficulties, in the crisis proves resourceful and plucky, and saves the day in a most thrilling manner.

The Flying Girl and Her Chum

This story takes Orissa and her friend Sybil through further adventures that test these two clever girls to the limit. A remarkably well told story.

12mo. Bound in extra cloth with design stamping on cover and fancy jacket. Printed on high grade paper. Illustrated in black and white.

Price 60 cents each. Postage 12 cents.

Publishers The Reilly & Britton Co. Chicago

Books for Older Children by L. Frank Baum

The Daring Twins Series

By L. FRANK BAUM

IN writing "The Daring Twins Series" Mr. Baum yielded to the hundreds of requests that have been made of him by youngsters, both boys and girls, who in their early childhood read and loved his famous "Oz" books, to write a story for young folk of the ages between twelve and eighteen.

A story of the real life of real boys and girls in a real family under real conditions

Two Titles:

The Daring Twins
Phoebe Daring

While preparing these books Mr. Baum lived with his characters. They have every element of the drama of life as it begins within the lives of children. The two stories are a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous; the foibles and fancies of childhood, interspersed with humor and pathos.

Price 75 cents net each

Publishers The Reilly & Britton Co. Chicago

A N N A B E L

By SUSANNE METCALF

A GIRLS' book with a clever, quick-moving plot is unusual. ANNABEL is that kind. The heroine is a lovable girl, but one with plenty of snap—her red hair testifies to that. Her friend, Will Carden, too, is a boy of unusual qualities, as is apparent in everything he does. He and Annabel make an excellent team.

The two, the best of chums, retrieve the fortunes of the Carden family in a way that makes some exciting situations. The secret of the mysterious Mr. Jordan is surprised by Annabel, while Will, in a trip to England with an unexpected climax, finds the real fortune of the Cardens.

ANNABEL is a book whose make-up is in keeping with the high quality of the story.

Beautiful cover and jacket in colors, 12 mo. Illustrated by Joseph Pierre Nuyttens. Price 60 cents

---

Publishers The Reilly & Britton Co. Chicago

Popular Memory Books for Girls

My Golden School Days

By JANET MADISON

A VERY attractive memory book for girls, in which they can keep a record of happy school days. There are places and departments for every item of interest—classmates, colors, yell, photographs, autographs, dances, etc. Appropriate decorations and headings for each department, with verses and poems. In special box. Two bindings.

Half Cloth, 60 cents. Swiss Velvet Ooze, $1.25

My Sorority

Designed by LOUISE PERRETT

A COMPLETE and cleverly designed memory book for girls who are members of the well-known "Greek Letter" Societies in high school or college. A record book with appropriately decorated headings for name, colors, secret motto, pin, grip, initiation, spreads, banquets, etc. In three styles.

Cloth, $1.50. Swiss Velvet Ooze, $2.50
De Luxe, Flexible Morocco, $3.00

Publishers The Reilly & Britton Co. Chicago

WEST FERRY
Circulating Library
Peggy Lewen